

**A Life of Death: The Redemption
A True Story of Growing up Abused**

**Written by
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***Dedication: To my brothers, Howard,
Robert, and Chesley***

I dedicate this book to every man, woman, and child whose lives have been sadly effected by child abuse. I wrote this book to promote public awareness about the reality and horror of child abuse. My goal and mission is to be one more voice speaking out against what we all know is wrong, child abuse and human rights abuses. This book is for every child who has suffered and every child who has had to live with abuse, and every child who has died because of abuse.

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How Many Fingers Am I Holding Up?

Chapter 1

“No, No, No!” I cried in three quick successions and in a defensive block with my arms tried to ward off the blows. A familiar voice spoke loudly and my eyes opened to see a hand in front of my face and the voice asking, “How many fingers am I holding up?”

I looked, but did not see any fingers, just the whole hand, a bit blurry and fuzzy looking. I had to look again, “Three?” “Good” she said. “Go back to sleep now” and this would repeat itself throughout the night but, always with a different question. “What day is it?”, “What is your name?”, “How old are you?” and each time I would drift off into a fitful sleep and dream the same nightmare all over again.

The next morning it would all make more sense as I remembered that my mother had cracked my head open once again. This time was the worst and I was so glad to be safe for the moment at my friend’s house. My friend, Deserie, and her

mother were up all night, taking turns watching over me while I slept. They woke me up every hour on the hour just to be sure I was not going into a coma or shock from the beating I had taken that particular day.

I don't recall why it went the way it did, sometimes I guess I may have had a smart mouth, or said things I should not have said, but this was just way over the top. It almost felt like it was planned and that my mother had set the whole thing up as she knew I did not like to eat a particular soup she would make, stewed tomatoes and milk, because the milk would curdle. I just did not like the combination. I probably said something about it as she called me for lunch.

The scene replayed over and over in the back of my mind as I explained to Deserie what exactly had happened. I had sat down at the kitchen table and, as I looked at the soup, I guess I said something my mother did not want to hear.

Her fists pounded against the kitchen table as my mother quickly stood up out of her chair. She was almost six feet tall and weighed about 260

pounds. Her ominous figure towered over me and I knew this was not going to be good.

I braced myself as the back of her hand caught me on my right cheek, my whole body fell backwards and to the left, including the chair. I cried out in pain as my left temple caught the side of the clothes dryer that was situated right behind me. I was stunned, but I knew I had better get out of the house or it was going to be a bad day for me.

I tried to get away. I was moving around the table as my mother was coming at me, cursing me like a banshee “You God damn piece of shit! You no good, rotten whore! I’ll take your God damn head off!” she screamed as she forcefully shoved the table into my side. I was trapped. I could not move. She had me right where she wanted me.

She reached for me, but I was well aware of the routine, so I tried to protect my head by curling up on my stomach to ward off some of the blows with my back. "Crack, Thud, Thud," was the sound the heavy homemade wooden rolling pin made as it hit my back, my shoulders and caught the back of my head.

By this point, my mother was in a rage well beyond knowing what she was doing, “YOU WANT SOME MORE???!!!!!!!” she screamed, as she kicked my legs and bending over grabbed my hair and pulled me up off the floor.

I silently whimpered and told her no, that I did not want any more but, she screamed into my ear again, “I SAID!!!! DO - YOU – WANT – SOME – MORE???” I could feel the wooden rolling pin hitting against the side of my head over and over again. I was trying to protect my head the best I could with my hands, until a blow eventually hit my hand. In pain, I brought my hand down, “Aaaaaaaaaiiiiiiiyyyyyyyyyy, not my head” I said “No, please....”

I begged, cried and pleaded for her to stop, but then I felt a swift crack as the rolling pin connected with the back of my head. My body was instantly weakened and limp. I could feel the blood pour down the back of my neck, curl around my ear, onto my face and drip down onto the floor.

That was not the first time my mother had spilled my blood, but it would be the last time that she would ever beat me like that again. She

grew tired and in her exhaustion could only muster up some cussing. I slowly got up off the floor, turned and was heading for safety walking through the living room, when she spun me around and spit in my face. She screamed, “GET OUT, YOU FUCKING SLUT! YOU'RE A PIECE OF SHIT!”

I was crying in shame and fearful of the woman who gave me life. I could feel the tears running from my eyes, streaming down onto my cheeks. I muttered a few words under my breath as she quickly shoved me to the front door, pushed me out and slammed it shut ,behind me.

I was dizzy, quite shaken and extremely upset. I slowly walked down the driveway and made my way up the street. I looked to see if my best friend Arlene's car was in the driveway, but she was working. She was a year older than me. I was only half way to 14 years old that summer. I walked down the block to my friend Deserie's house. She had moved there with her family the year before and we had become good friends. Her parents were nice and I had no other place to go.

Decisions

Chapter 2

The screen door squeaked as I opened it. It was summer and very hot in New Mexico. I opened the front door of Deserie's house and said loudly, "Deserie?? Are you here?" and her mother came towards me and looked at me surprised, saying "Aren't you going to knock first?" "Deserie's not here. She has summer school and she won't be home until later."

I was embarrassed to be caught coming into their home without knocking, but Deserie always said just to come in so I apologized and wiped my tears away in shame.

I was dizzy and shaking. I felt very ill and I needed to sit down before I fell down, "Would it be okay if I wait on your porch for Deserie?" I asked sheepishly. Deserie's mom was a nurse and she knew something was wrong... she asked, "Are you alright?" and walked closer to me as I had been half hidden by the front door.

“What happened to you, sweetie?” she asked as she looked at my face and the blood that had been slowly dripping down my neck. A bright red welt covered my right cheek from my mother's backhand that I had received and was now very noticeable.

“My mom and I had a fight” I said, rather casually. “She won.” I said. “Let me take a look at you sweetie, come here,” she persisted taking a more serious diagnostic look at what had occurred and summed it up. “I am a nurse, Laurie. You know that, don't you? I work at the hospital and I think we should take you for an examination.”

I grew more and more nervous, literally shaking in my shoes, as she spoke to me and the word examination freaked me out. I did not want to go. If my mom found out all hell would break loose and I did not want to be removed from my home. As silly as it sounds, I loved my mom, my dad, my sister and my brothers. I didn't want to be forcibly removed from our home or be separated from my family. Our family may not have been the best in the world, but it was all I had. And my thoughts were if they remove me

from my home, who's to say the situation would not be worse than what I already had?

We were almost removed from the home once before and so I told her “No, I do not want to go to the hospital.” She then asked me if I would allow her to check me out to see if there were any broken bones or internal injuries that might have occurred. I agreed to let her to examine me in the privacy of her home.

A little while later, the front door slowly opened and Deserie and her dad proceeded inside. Both were looking at me in surprise and said “Hey Laurie, what’s up?” Her mom told them what happened. Deserie and her mom then nurtured me and cleaned me up. I remember how hard it was to wash the dried blood from my pale skin.

We all sat in the living room afterward trying to decide what to do. I had a small crack on my skull, not bad, and the bleeding had stopped, but Deserie's mom, B.J. thought it would still be better to go to the hospital.

We sat there talking back and forth endlessly. I had a bag of frozen vegetables on my face and head and ice packs on my back. They asked me

questions like “Does this happen often at your house, Laurie?” I was embarrassed to tell them the truth, but I admitted it was just the way it was at my house.

Deserie chimed in, “Yes, you should see how mean they treat Laurie. I was over there and I saw it for myself. They are all crazy!” Deserie said with a slight laugh.

I had actually told Deserie to leave one time when she was over at my house. We had been listening to a Styx album and my dad burst into my bedroom and told me to "Turn that devil music off!!" We were not hurting anyone and the music wasn't really that loud so I did not listen to him. Instead I only turned the volume down a few clicks and he got angry.

My mother was also angry and the two of them were mad at me, threatening all sorts of bodily harm. I probably shouldn't have, but I told my dad that I hated his guts. I looked him eye to eye and said, "I hate your fuckin' guts!" I no more got the words out of my mouth and he flew off the handle. He forced me up against the wall, pinned by his knuckles that he was pushing and digging into my ribs.

With his other hand he started to take off his belt, and Deserie, who had been witnessing this whole event take place, stood in disbelief. She did not know what to do. I told her as the belt buckle struck my face, "You better go, Deserie" she shook her head no, but once I began to cry out she became scared and went home. My father knocked me down to the floor and proceeded to beat me with his belt.

Deserie told her parents, B.J. and Olan, what she had witnessed. They sat there looking at me in amazement and shock as we talked amongst the four of us. Olan said, "Do you want us to intervene, Laurie?" "We will intervene on your behalf if you want us to...I really think we should."

I told them I did not want them to go to the police as we had been nearly taken from our parents before when my brother, Rob, was just a young kid. He showed up at school in a winter turtleneck in the middle of the hot, New Mexico summer weather and a nurse immediately noted bruises on his face and questioned him. He told the school nurse that he was afraid to go home and the authorities quickly became involved. I remember being a very small girl and having to

take my clothes off for the two social workers assigned to our case on a regular basis. Our mother pleaded with the court to allow us to stay and the courts said only if my parents agreed to go to counseling. They agreed, went twice, and then we promptly moved to Canada.

One of the "Smith" Kids

Chapter 3

"Well, for tonight you better stay at our house so we can keep an eye on you overnight, but if it starts to look like a concussion we will definitely have to take you in to the hospital. Is that a deal?" B.J. asked, smiling at me, blue eyes filled with love and compassion. "I will talk with your mother and let her know that you are going to stay here. I just don't know how she could treat such a nice young girl this way?" she shook her head and went to the kitchen to clean up the supper dishes.

Deserie usually did the dishes as part of her chores, but not tonight. Her mom knew she would want to just console me. I hesitantly went to sleep and woke with a start to "How many fingers am I holding up?" Deserie's mom worried about me all night and continued to check on me.

The very next morning, B.J. went down and talked with my mom. I never knew the exact

conversation, but I believe she must have told my mom that if she ever heard me speak of a beating or being mistreated again, or saw one more sign of abuse, she and her husband would intervene on my behalf and phone the proper authorities.

My mom, I heard, responded that she did not care either way because she did not want me at her home anyway. She was tired of my attitude and did not care if I ever came home, period.

B.J. then told me she would allow me to stay with them for a week to give my mom a breather and a chance to cool off. And, if it was agreeable with all parties, I could stay with them off and on as long as it took, just to ease some of the pressures my mother was dealing with at home and to have a chance to help me out and share some love they knew I was lacking at my house. I never expected her to, but my mother agreed.

I spent the entire next week at their home. It was summer time and we would spend hours on the porch talking with my other best friend, Arlene. We would go to Ar's house and sit in her room

listening to albums, talking about boys and doing our hair.

We also had another hobby we liked to share and that was to get high. I was 13 that summer, going into the tenth grade, and would be a sophomore at high school. We all used to go to school together, but a riot at the school had Deserie's and Ar's parents fuming mad, so they changed schools and now went to another high school.

I messed up my only attempt to change schools when I showed up completely stoned for an interview with the dean. They refused to accept me. They claimed, I did not live in the right district, which was a lie.

I believe I should have been allowed to change schools because I lived on the same street my friends lived on, two houses from Arlene and three houses from Deserie, so I thought I should be allowed to go to the same school as them, too.

I know I was in the wrong. I was high, and my parents did not care, so I left it at that and never attempted to change schools again.

Arlene had been my childhood best friend. She used to look out for me in elementary school. She was in the second grade and I was in the first grade. She used to even come and check on me during the day in my classroom just to see if I was okay. That's how she was, my guardian angel.

We grew up together and her mom would always let me play at her house, but she was never allowed at my house as her mom had seen and probably heard all the screaming and shouting going on at my house. The police cars and ambulances knew our house all too well, too, as they were called to our house on a regular basis. I can't lie, it hurt my feelings she was not allowed to play at my house, but I couldn't blame her mother. It was quite embarrassing for me to grow up in a neighborhood where everyone knew your business and judged you as "One of the Smith kids."

That week at Deserie's house was like something out of an old fashioned television show. They sat at the table together for meals, they talked about their day and gave the Blessing over each meal. B.J. and Olan did not scream at each other, throw things at each other or beat on each other.

They also did not scream at or beat on their children.

They seemed genuinely interested in how their daughter and two sons were doing and asked them if they needed anything. Sometimes there would be minor disagreements, especially over chores or grades, but in all the years I knew this family and all the time I spent with them in their home, they were just normal, average, nice people who wanted the best for their children.

They treated me just like one of their own and continually made me feel quite at home. I did not know it then, but their example would make its mark and set the stage for my ability to move past the abusive "learned" behaviors that I had learned from my parents such as hatred, cursing, destructive behavior, violence, self loathing and irresponsibility, and replace them with the ones they instilled in my heart: Love, compassion, care, concern, responsibility and accountability.

Just Go Ahead and Kill Me

Chapter 4

"Man, she's going to kill me for sure!" I thought to myself as I walked up the steps to our porch and opened the front door. My heart was racing and I was felt nauseated as it had only been five days since my mother had brutally attacked me in the kitchen.

I knew she would be in the kitchen waiting for me and, as I came through the doorway, she grabbed me and pushed me up against the wall with her forceful hand on my throat. She was visibly upset and said, "If you ever, and I mean EVER tell another living soul about what goes on in this household, I will kill you!!!" She slowly removed her hand from my throat and then calmly sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette.

I knew that was my opportunity to head to my bedroom. I tried to control my anger as I made my way down the hallway. I had heard her say that to me so many times now that I did not pay much attention to it anymore.

When I was ten years old, I used to say to her face, "Why don't you just go ahead and kill me?" and I used to think it to myself sometimes after listening to her berating me or after a beating while sitting alone in the dark wishing she would just go ahead and kill me.

Death, darkness and murderous overtones hung about the walls in our house, no matter which house we lived in. It just followed us wherever we went. There was no love, no sympathy, and no remorse.

I had always felt dead, as though my spirit had been physically taken from me. I remember the grim day I actually realized that I felt dead because it was another bad scene. I was ten years old and there would be no rescuing me from this one and no kind words of a compassionate nature. We had just moved back to Albuquerque from British Columbia, Canada.

We were only in Canada for three short months when my brother got busted for possession of marijuana. My parents quickly packed us all up and we moved back to Albuquerque. We moved just two blocks from where I grew up and I continued on at the same elementary school I

started out at. The only good thing was I got to see all of my old friends again and Arlene was still my best friend.

Things soon went from bad to worse. A tragedy struck our family that, today, is still a haunting nightmare for me as the truth was not told, lies ensued and the case was not solved. My brother Chesley was killed. Whether it was a murder or an accident is still not known today.

The FBI eventually ruled it an accident and the case was closed. There were a few witnesses who claimed to know the truth, but for some unknown reason they were not talking.

Our family had struggled from the beginning, and the original case against my parents for child abuse against my brother, Rob, was already five years old. During this time my parents went to counseling twice and then somehow, between social worker visits, managed to control themselves for a little while.

We moved to Canada and then back to New Mexico and,, for the time being, were now out of the direct eyes of our case workers.

Stress levels were at an all time high, though, as my parents struggled to cope with the death of their son. My mother's health deteriorated. Her mental, emotional and physical health seemed so fragile.

My dad had lost his mind and was now attempting to "off" himself on a regular basis by running down the freeway in the middle of the night. My brothers, Howard and Rob, would have to go get him and bring him home. They even had to bar him in his bedroom just to keep him alive, out of fear of him seriously hurting himself or claiming his own life.

I had become a human punching bag. We lived in a house on Indian School Road from 1973 until 1977, and those were the darkest and loneliest years of my life.

Our family was once again uprooted as we moved back onto the same street I grew up on, La Veta, in 1978. We moved into a rental house right next door to the one my parents sold to move to Canada back in 1972. My mom's anger and abusive behavior toward me was at an all time high.

I remember many bad scene's there before Deserie and her family moved onto the block. I thought back to the time when I had eaten something that made me sick and, during the night, I started choking. Well, I thought I was just choking, but I had actually threw up all over my bed. My mom did not come to my aid. In fact, she was upset with me for making too much noise and making a mess and forced me to sleep on my throw up.

I have many unpleasant memories in my childhood. As long as I live I will never forget the day my parents refused to seek medical attention for me even though I could not walk for three days. My nephew had pulled a chair out from under me and I had fallen on a huge root that was sticking up out of the ground at a neighborhood backyard party. My dad took me home, put me on the couch and went back to the party.

I thought of the time when my friends Mike, Mark and Michelle were all hanging out in our yard one day. My dad came home and picked up a cane off of a Spanish broom plant and began whipping my legs with it sending me into convulsions. My friends lived across the street

and they were used to seeing my parents beat me, but that day they all took off upon seeing my dad whip me with that cane.

I can remember the time my dad dragged me by one leg across the living room and, as he was taking me to the bedroom to whip me with a belt, dragged me around the corner through the hallway. I was grabbing onto furniture, doorways or whatever I could to try to get away.

My actions made him more angry and he jerked my hip around the corner of the doorway. I screamed out in pain knowing he had just severely injured me, but he threw me on the bed and began to beat me with his belt anyway. As I continued to scream out in pain my brother Ches came to my aide and convinced him to stop. I still have hip problems to this day.

I remember my brother giving me puffs off of a cigar and I got sick. My mom was cursing everyone. I was only four-years old, but I remember because she grabbed me and put soap in my mouth. She treated me like it was my fault. I guess at four-years old she thought I had chosen to light and smoke a cigar by myself, when in truth, I did not even know my actions

were wrong. As part of my punishment, she threw me in the bathtub, wet a towel and beat me with it. I sobbed as I wondered what I had done to deserve that kind of treatment.

I always used to tell my mom I loved her when I was little, but she would never tell me she loved me back. Not even once. I eventually stopped saying I loved her at all. She was turning me into herself, little by little, piece by piece, minute by minute.

She was amused quite easily by humiliating us, too. My sister, Kathi, and I were made to sit at her feet and beg for her forgiveness and tell her how sorry we were for being bad. I know I was not more than six-years old. We should have been receiving love, attention and nurturing, but instead we were treated as nothing, but a burden.

I later found out my mom suffered from manic depression and my dad was diagnosed with borderline schizophrenic disorder, but I think they misdiagnosed him because he was definitely schizo paranoid. I always knew there had to be an underlying issue for their dysfunctional behavior, but it was far from a valid excuse. There is no excuse for child abuse.

In This Corner, Heavy Weight Champion

Chapter 5

Oh, the days of hell I can remember on Indian School Road. I thought back to the time I told my mother to go ahead and kill me, as I was dead already on the inside. Anger came rushing in like a hot, southern wind blowing through the desert. It seemed I was always angry during that point in my life.

I went to my bedroom and flopped down on the bed. I turned my record player on, lifted the needle, set it down on the record and began listening to the band Styx. "Tommy Shaw is so cute..." I thought to myself.

I wonder who's got some weed-- was my next thought. Maybe Arlene will know someone or we can ask around. All I knew was that I need to get STONED!! My head was full of thoughts of anger and I looked at a piece of paper hanging on my wall. It was a poem I had written for my mother last year for my Spanish class. It read in English, "My mother, the most beautiful mother

in the world. She is also the nicest, sweetest, best mother in the world in my eyes." "She is my Sun, my Moon, my Stars in the sky." When I wrote that it had come from my heart. I loved my mother very much, but she sure had a real funny way of showing how much she loves me, I thought to myself as I stretched out on my bed.

I wondered what my brother, Howard, was doing. My thoughts were he's probably out getting drugs, getting busted, or overdosing as he did on a regular basis. My brother, Rob, was in Canada. He moved up when we were living on Indian School Road after our other brother, Chess, was killed. He hung around in a pit of despair for a year and then eventually left for Canada. He and Chesley were so close and Chess was always sticking up for Rob as my dad had it in for Rob and beat on him whenever he could.

I suddenly thought to myself as I rolled over on my side that Tommy Shaw was singing the songs just for me, "Why does my mom hate me? Why does she not want me?" Images from my early days made their way into my head, images and recollections of beatings that took place years before were still just as fresh.

I hugged my pillow and began daydreaming as I remembered the days of hell on earth in the house on Indian School Road.

I flashed back to the day I gripped the margarine tub filled with water tightly, "Ohhh...be careful, do not spill this water...mommy will be mad" I was thinking to myself as I opened the screen door to go out to the back yard.

I had my barbie dolls set up outside. It was summertime, a beautiful blue sky, very warm, and not a cloud in the sky. The screen door slammed loudly behind me as the rebound self-closing attachment was the old fashioned kind, not the air pump kind that closes slowly on it's own. The screen door closed with a "crash" and I could hear my mom yelling at me from inside the house at the top of her lungs..."LAURIE - ANN - SMITH!!!!!" I knew I was in trouble as she always called me like that when I was about to get beat.

I came back into the house. I was a nervous eight-year old girl and, as I accidentally let go of the screen door it slammed again. Looking across the kitchen at her I could see her coming for me, "I told you not to let that door slam,

didn't I?" "I told you not to wake baby Shannon, didn't I?" Baby Shannon was the neighbor's baby girl my mom was looking after for the day.

I started to run as I could see her heading for me with the look of anger and hatred mixed in and rolled into one vicious visage. "Come here," she grabbed me by my arm and yanked me down onto my knees. The floor was an uneven, stone utility room floor and was, literally, rock hard.

My knees cracked on impact. I winced in pain as she grabbed a table leg from a coffee table that had become useless for anything except to use as weapons of war and shouted at me "You NEVER listen!! You NEVER do as you are told!! She began to beat me with the table leg and I cried, of course. I was upset because I was trying to tell her I did not mean it and that I was sorry, but she was not listening.

As usual, she cursed at me and dragged me outside, dropping me on the ground by the tub of water which was to be my barbie pool. "STAY OUT! YOU HEAR ME?????" I just layed there, fighting back the tears, writhing in pain from the beating she had dished out. Tommy Shaw's song was over and Dennis DeYoung

took over. He had a great voice. I loved his voice, too, I thought as I pondered the question again, "Why does she hate me?"

I drifted again back to the house of hell and remembered a time when I was ten-years old. My nephews had been over at our house and were starting to annoy me. They were not all that much younger than myself as my mother and my oldest sister were both pregnant at the same time.

My mom was pregnant with me and my sister was having her first child three months after I was brought into the world. "I said LEAVE ME ALONE" I stomped from the back yard into the house. Going straight to my sisters and mine shared room. I slammed the door not once, not twice, but three times, opening it and closing it and each time repeating "Stay out of my room!"

My mother heard me slamming my door and I could hear her from the kitchen. "God damn....YOU!! You STUPID BITCH!" I heard her get up from the kitchen table and thought to myself, "Now I'm in trouble..oh, oh....." and I stood there kind of snickering to myself. Kathi was sitting on the bed doing her homework.

Kathi heard my mom coming, too, and issued a quick warning... "You better stop", but it was already too late.

My mother came into my room and started to curse at me, grabbing both of my wrists with her hand, leaving one hand free to slap the shit out of me.

At the top of her lungs she yelled at me furiously, shaking me like a mere rag doll, squeezing my wrist bones together like peanuts, "YOU FUCKING WHORE! YOU God damn PIECE OF SHIT!!! Each slap coinciding in rhythm with each curse word that came out of her mouth.

"HOW DARE YOU! God (slap)... Damn (slap)... STUPID (slap)... WHORE (Slap)!! The blood from my nose splattered on the wall. Her rings were cutting my cheek and the top right side of my lip was busted open and blood was streaming down my chin. I was completely helpless. I could not even defend myself as she still had a tight grip on my wrists.

I was instantly weak and light headed. I felt like I was ready to pass out when, with the last slap,

she let go of me and I went sailing to the floor. I stayed down. I didn't move. I don't even think I took a breath, in fear of her reacting again.

I dared not even look at her. Blood was pouring from my lip and nose. I had my hand cupped under it trying to catch as much blood as I could. It was on the wall, the carpet, my clothes, her clothes, my shoes (and that was just round one).

"Clean this mess up..." she grumbled as she left the room. I went to the bathroom and turned the trash can over to stand on so I could see in the mirror. I stepped up on the trash can and, as my face came into view, I nearly vomited.

My face was completely ravaged. She had literally re-arranged my face! I became very angry. I grabbed toilet paper and began to try to get my nose to stop bleeding. By this time, blood was all over the sink, the toilet, the floor and the trash can. I leaned over thinking that might help. I leaned back and it flowed down the back of my throat. I could not get it to stop.

My sister Kathi came into the bathroom and told me to lean forward and pinch my nose. She appeared to be in shock from witnessing the

event, and she hated the sight of blood. She looked weakened at the knees and quickly left the bathroom.

I started to cry, still holding the tissue under my nose. I went into the hallway and yelled at my mother, "WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO AHEAD AND KILL ME!!! I'M DEAD ANYWAY", with that said I went and sat down on the bathroom floor, nose still bleeding.

My mother heard me and was back for round two, this time armed with a belt. The belt whipped through the air, catching my legs, "I'LL KILL YOU, YOU ROTTEN SELFISH LITTLE BITCH!! I'LL KILL YOU, MARK MY WORDS! GOD DAMN YOU TO HELL! YOU FUCKIN' WHORE!!!"

With all the commotion my brother, Howard, came to my rescue and took the belt from her. To this day I still don't know how he convinced her enough was enough and to let go of the belt. I'm convinced, if he had not convinced her to stop she may have truly killed me.

Led Zeppelin, Locker Room, 360's in the Camaro

Chapter 6

"Hey mom" I said into the phone, "Just checking in. I'm gonna stay at Deserie's another few days okay?" I was at Deserie's house again for a couple of weeks. I could hear the tension in my mother's voice as I spoke with her, "Your father's up to his same old shit again," she said, "I do not know how much more I can stand!!"

I knew what she was talking about. My dad had been forcing himself on her and raping her, or attempting to rape her. That is what would happen when no one was at the house to stop him. This, of course, would turn violent and my mom's health was already a problem. Domestic violence in our home was at an all time high now.

Deserie was behind me as I was pacing around the room as far as the phone cord would permit. "Just kill him," I said. No change in my voice, just a statement and one I had told my mother

before. "Just solve the problem and take him out...I'll do it...." I said, looking at Deserie, who did not quite know who we were talking about, but had an idea I'm sure. "Well, you have to look out for yourself mom, you should tell him to leave, or else just leave him. I'll go with you. We can get our own place..." how many times my mother had heard that from all of her children.

My parents did not get along and my mother spoke freely about how crazy my dad was, the things he would do to "her boys" and how he mistreated her and them when they were younger. I heard this many times and did not understand why she stayed with my dad. She said she loved him, and that he was "sick", so that must have been the reason.

My dad was very abusive toward my mother, physically abusing her when they were first married, calling her names, berating her in public, making her feel so insignificant and denying her access to health care, to birth control, to money for living expenses including food, and subjecting her to repeated and abusive marital rape and violence.

I had witnessed all of it myself as my dad had raped my mother in front of me for the first time when I was only 6-years old. I always took my mother's side against my dad, even though she treated me so badly.

This time she was going to have to deal with him on her own. "Gotta go mom... I'll see you in a few days okay?" I rushed off the phone and we hung up.

I looked at Deserie who was smiling, and "the party" had just started. It was the weekend and summer was almost over. Deserie's boyfriend, Tim, just pulled up in his Camaro and we were out the door. I climbed into the back seat, the sunset was just fading and the night was young. The heat from the sun fading with the light as the night sky would soon come into view. I sat back and hung on as Tim had decided to do some 360's on the long stretch of highway just north of the city.

Led Zepplin was playing so loud we couldn't talk even if we wanted to. A big, fat joint was going around, a bottle of Locker Room was flung at me from the front seat. I sat back, opened the lid, took a sniff, put the lid on and

was gone..."Oooo ooooo yahhh yahhhh,
ooooo ooooo yahhhh yahhhh...Oh, let the
sun beat down upon my face, stars to fill my
dream, I am a traveler of both time and space, to
be where I have been." Robert Plant's voice was
ringing in my ears...the notes in the song striking
my ear drums and the sound of the drums pacing
with my heartbeat.

Stoned out of my mind, I could tell we were
speeding down the highway. Just then, for a
moment, a thought came into my head...."I don't
care if I live or die, I just don't care anymore" I
was content to just sit in the back seat of that car,
so far from my family, so far from the abuse, so
far from the pain...so completely numb that I
honestly did not care if I died right then and
there.

My mind drifted back to the house of hell on
Indian School Road. I remembered what the
doctors said to my sister and I. "Make sure you
do not get your mother upset and make sure she
is not disturbed by anyone. She needs to rest or
she could die." I don't know how the doctor
figured that a nine-year old and a fourteen-year
old were going to be able to do that, but we took

this very seriously as my mother had to have major hernia surgery which almost took her life.

They sliced her from her privates to the top of her stomach to repair the mess and then sewed her back up as best they could. If infection set in, she could die. If she did not get rest she could die. And, since we did not have any health insurance the hospital discharged her leaving her care solely up to us.

I did not want my mother to die. Even though she cursed me, belittled me, savagely beat on me and told me on a regular basis how much she hated me, I did not want to be in my dad's care alone. He was crazy and had tried to drive my sister and I over a cliff one time. He even used to try to convince me to leave my "crazy" mother and go to California with him.

I told him I would jump out of the car if we didn't go home immediately. Only five-years old and ready to jump from a moving car if that's what it took to get away from my father. I was flat out determined to keep my mother alive. My sister was five-years older than me and she was in charge of cleaning my mother's wounds. My dad should have been the one to do it, but my

mother insisted that he not be permitted to come near her as she needed to rest, not to be antagonized.

Not two nights after my mom had come home from the hospital, I heard her from my bedroom next door. "No Worden, leave me alone... please go away, I am sick and hurting and I want you to leave..." she was pleading with him. He, of course, was not listening and continued his crap and she was getting more and more upset.

I got up out of bed, took my big, pink plastic baseball bat and held it up, ready to swing. I went into my mom's room and came up behind him. She was getting more upset and she began struggling to push him away, when I aimed my bat for his head and smacked him with it as hard as I could.

He had been on his knees by her bedside and his glasses flew off. I shouted at him "Leave her alone"...he grabbed me by my arms and shook me like a doll, tossed me back across the room. I hit the wall, my upper back connecting first and then my head, I then slid down into a slump on the floor.

He was cursing at me and started kicking me, when my mother screamed for my brothers. They came and pushed my dad out of the room, picked me up and tried to console me. Years later it was said that my dad had been at her bedside that night praying for my mom. I do not know if I believe that.

All I know is that whether or not the bat was plastic had nothing to do with my decision to use it that night. It did not bother me until just a few years ago as an adult, when I wondered what would have happened had it been made of wood.

I seriously thought that my mom would have been happy that I tried to protect her. I could not understand why she treated me so bad, because I always took her side on everything. I thought it should count for something. The years to follow would be even worse, though.

She recovered and, from the time I was ten until I turned twelve, I cannot count how many times I would be beaten, slapped and cursed at. During those two-years she put hatred in my heart.

Hatred for my own self, and hatred in general for life. There were many people who could have

put a stop to it. Friends of the family knew what was going on, but thought I was a “bad” kid and must have deserved to be disciplined like that.

Family members and neighbors felt sorry for my mom and turned a "blind" eye when it came to seeing me battered and bruised. Neighbors saw my mom beating me in the front yard one time. Half the neighborhood was out watching as my mom whipped me with a belt and kicked my ass for leaving a pencil under the bed.

My sister, Kathi, had been making her bed in the room we shared. I must have left a pencil and paper under her bed and forgot about it. She put her foot under the bed, slipped on the pencil and the lead broke off in her toe, so she told my mom and my mom screamed at me and was coming at me with the belt. I started running out the front door. I made it out, but not quickly enough as my mom knocked me down to the ground in the middle of a cactus patch.

My hands and knees were full of cactus thorns and goats heads. My mom beat me senseless in the front yard until my legs were covered in dust, welts and blood.

The neighbors across the street were all standing there just watching while the other neighbors next door were coming out to see what was going on. I was burning with indignation and humiliation as my mom called me everything under the sun. When she had finally finished her tirade, she went inside leaving me out there in the dirt to suffer all alone.

The next couple of days my friend, whose parents were watching the whole scenario, asked me over to her house and when I came in the door, her parents and some other people were looking at my legs, "Look what her mom did to her legs!" my friend Angela said to her mom, and they all laughed at me. I was so embarrassed. How can people be so mean and hurtful, I thought. They actually thought it was funny.

My sister, Irene, knew how my parents were yet she always said I was a spoiled brat and needed my ass kicked. I did not like to go to her house very often as she reminded me way too much of my mother. She did not like children, but still had two boys of her own that she raised with a hard and heavy hand.

My sister, Kathi, was living in a vacuum of her own space. I think it was the only way she could survive. She was gone most of the time and even when she was home.... she wasn't home, she was a million miles away. She never ate with us, and only came home long enough to shower and change and she was gone. So, those years on Indian School Road made a long, lasting impression in my mind, body and soul.

All Bets Are Off

Chapter 7

"Just tell me what you took?" I could hear my mom asking. "Drink some of this coffee. Hey-- Are you listening to me?" I came into the kitchen to see what was going on and I could tell it had something to do with pills.

Howard was sitting at the kitchen table with glazed eyes and no emotion whatsoever..."Do you know what kind of pills you took, Howard?" My mom asked him repeatedly trying to get any information she could from him.

My brother had been abusing prescription medication for years and my mom was always searching through his room looking for his stash. On the rare occasion she found it she would call the "pill" hotline and find out what they were so she would know what he was on.

My brother was not responding. As I was looking at him, his lips were turning an awful shade of blue, then his face and then he was

down. He slowly slid out of his seat and slumped onto the kitchen floor. He was literally dying in front of our eyes.

My mom screamed for my sister Kathi, "Call 911, Howard is having a drug overdose!" Kathi jumped on the phone and the ambulance was on it's way. They were there within minutes and as they rushed into the kitchen, kicked us all out and began working on him.

When I close my eyes I can still see my brother on that floor and hear the electric shock chargers. I can hear the medic saying, "Clear" and POW the electricity pumping through my brother's body trying to get his heart to start beating again.

They decided to try and save his life on the way to the emergency room instead of wasting time at the house. They were still working on him as they wheeled him out to and loaded him into the ambulance. I've never been so scared in my life.

Fortunately, they did save his life, but he was clinically dead for over 5 minutes and was in a coma for three weeks. When he eventually came out of the coma he thought he was in Canada

and began asking my parents why they had come to Canada to see him. He was extremely confused and slightly brain damaged after the incident. That was just the kind of thing that would happen at our house.

My brothers would have killed me if they knew I was now getting high or doing drugs. I never asked them for any and they never offered me any and we kept it like that. My mom would have killed me, too, for that matter. I was a good kid and never got into any trouble in high school. I spent my ninth grade year getting stoned almost everyday with Arlene and then Arlene, Deserie and me when Deserie moved onto our block.

I was 12-years old when I started high school, a year younger than most students in the ninth grade due to the fact that my mom put me in school at the age of four. It was much safer for me at school, though, and I have no doubt it was a suggestion from the social workers.

I was also only 12 when I started getting high. Arlene and I shared a locker, but we did not have any classes together as she was one year older than me and in the 10th grade. I was

always so stoned I could never remember the locker number so I rarely had my books. My grades suffered because I was always high in class. I would even walk across the football field drinking Schnapps or grain alcohol on the way to my English class.

I always had a good time in that class and the teacher was always just shy of turning me in. My favorite class was Spanish and I was already speaking, writing and reading at an intermediate level. I had already been enrolled in it for 3 years and I really enjoyed the class and my teacher. Halfway through the day Arlene and Deserie would always find me... "We are out of here!" they would say. They knew I would not ditch class, but they always asked me anyway. I always said no. I did not need any more reasons for my mom or dad to be coming down on me as they already didn't even need a reason.

I stayed out of trouble and virtually invisible all the way through high school. When Arlene and Deserie changed schools I started hanging around with some "straight" girls who didn't drink or do drugs. They were all nice girls from nice homes. They thought I was funny because I was always stoned and half tanked, and they

thought for sure I would not live to be 30 years old, but in the end I proved them wrong!

Dreams

Chapter 8

"Sssshhh...be quiet!" Arlene urgently whispered as she climbed in her bedroom window. I quickly climbed in after her, tip-toeing through the pitch black room. We had snuck out and gone to a biker party that night.

I told my mom I was spending the night at Arlene's, Deserie told her mom she was spending the night at Arlene's, and we actually thought we had it made. "Go close the door," she whispered to me as she motioned to her bedroom door which was slightly ajar. I reached for the door handle, grabbed it and just as I had my hand on it to pull the door closed, it flung open on me.

BUSTED! Her mom charged in the room. "You girls are in big trouble!!!" her mom said, looking very disappointed at her daughter, then at me. She had checked on us and discovered we were not in Arlene's room and was waiting up all night for us to come back in. It was now three

a.m. and she was not impressed. "And, you, young lady..." she screamed at me... my heart began pounding.

I was sure she was going to tell my mom. I could feel my heart pounding harder and harder as the seconds passed. I took a deep breath and I swore my heart was going to jump out of my chest.

"I'm not going to tell your mother only because I know what she will do to you!" Arlene's mother had seen the aftermath of some of those beatings I received and I think she knew that it would not do anyone any good to get beat like that again.

She did, however, tell her daughter that she was grounded and was going to be punished for this bad move on our part. She got the belt that night. I wasn't allowed to go over to her house for a month, but I was forever grateful that her mom never told my mom.

When I was fourteen, I looked sixteen. Arlene and Deserie were older than me and used to look out for me when we were out partying. They were my "protectors" and were always watching out for guys trying to hit on me, especially if I had been drinking or was too wasted.

More than once I partied with them until I passed out, waking up the next morning grateful that my clothes were still on. It could be scary for a girl my age. They were truly the best friends a person could ever have and I was fortunate to have them as my guardian angels.

Deserie's family had moved across the city making it hard to hang out unless her dad would come and pick me up. They lived on the last city road on the north side and there were no buses out there.

I saw less and less of Deserie as that year rolled on. Then she moved away to Oklahoma to stay with her Grandma who needed a hand around the house.

I was starting my Junior year in high school and Arlene was now busy with her new boyfriend, working part time and, with that competition, I saw less and less of her.

The winter of '81 Arlene told me something that I would never forget and she told me strictly because she knew I would believe her. We had been best friends since we were practically babies and she knew me, I knew her.

We were sisters and best friends all rolled into one. She said to me one day, "Robert had the same dream as me the other night," she looked upset. "I am telling you this because you are the only one who will believe me." I nodded my head and replied, "You bet."

I was wondering what had made her so upset. "I dreamed that it was prom night and Robert was in an accident and his parents were standing by his coffin. I had asked them what happened and they said he had been hit by a car. I now fear for the worst because Robert had the same dream!" she said, looking at me very seriously now.

Robert was Arlene's fiance and they were so in love. "Then you will not believe what happened!" she said, "He had the same dream I did, but it was me in the coffin! He was trying to call me at the same time I was trying to call him and when he finally got through he told me about the dream." she looked scared and worried. "This is what you have to do," I said to her, sitting on her bed. I remember Billy Joel playing in the background. "Don't worry. Just don't drive on prom night and don't do anything crazy or stupid!" I said, hoping that would reassure her.

Spring finally arrived and, as the week before prom night approached, Arlene and Robert had broke off their engagement. The night of the prom she had decided to drive to Robert's house to see him. As she was driving, she veered off the road and her car went down an embankment.

She had hit her head hard and was very disoriented. She managed to climb out of her car and made her way back up the embankment and onto the road, and was hit and killed by a passing car.

My mom came into my room after she received the phone call in the middle of the night, "Laurie, there's been a terrible accident," my mom said. "I know. Arlene's dead. She was hit by a car!" I already knew and my heart sank.

You're Not Supposed To Be Here

Chapter 9

The grass was wet under my feet, the park was empty and void of all light other than the bright stadium light that lit the north side up like daylight. I was sitting on the concrete picnic table, cold and shivering. Suddenly Arlene walked up to where I was sitting.

"What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here." I whispered. "Hey, will you do me a favor?" she asked. "What is it?" I hesitated, she was the one person I did not want to let down, as she had always been there for me. "Will you give my mom a message?" She asked.

I looked at her and said, "I don't know because your mom thinks I'm crazy already." She didn't wait for any more excuses from me. She pushed the issue again saying, "Will you do it?"

I did not want to let her down, that would have been the last thing I would have wanted, but the more I thought about it, the more I knew I could

not do it. "If you don't want to, that's okay. I won't be mad," she said. "Sorry Ar, I just can't do it." with that she turned and started to walk off through the park.

BBBBRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!!!!!" the alarm clock suddenly rang. I shut it off, turned over and realized that I had just had an out of body experience. I missed my friend terribly and was struggling to get by day-to-day now.

I quickly got ready and went to catch the school bus. Sitting at the same park I had talked to Arlene at in my dream, Alvarado Park, I looked around and thought, how weird, I wonder why I would not do a favor for my friend? It had a lot to do with how I thought her mom felt about me, and how my mom felt about me, and how I felt about me.

It had only been a couple of weeks since Arlene's funeral and I was devastated. I started to think that it should have been me, not her, to go to the grave at such an early age. After all, her mom and dad loved her. Her two sisters and two brothers loved her as well. She was the baby in her family. The youngest, like me.

They were a close knit family and were very much an average normal family. Not rich, not poor, but lots of love in the home. I thought, how could God do this?

Why didn't he take me instead of her. She would have gone on to be married and have children and have a nice life, I thought as the bus was pulling up. She would have probably done great things with her life as an adult.

Her mom didn't hate her and tell her that she was not wanted, like mine. My mom had made it clear from the beginning that I was born out of marital rape, not wanted and that she wished I'd died along with the other two just before me.

She often told me that she should have just let me rot in my diapers and starve to death. As it was I came in by C-Section as my mom was so sick with RH disease. Both of our blood types were trying to poison and kill each other off.

The doctors had to take me early, three months early. I was born weighing just under three pounds and was in an incubator until I weighed a healthier weight.

My mom did not know I was even alive for two weeks after I was born because she was in and out of a coma. I had my own nurse and doctor assigned to me. My nurse is the woman who actually gave me my name, Laurie Ann, not my parents.

It was not necessarily the happiest of occasions when I came into the world. No one was passing around celebration cigars. My dad had not been there for my mother for the last eight children born, the last two were born stillborn.

He even went so far as to claim that none of us were his offspring. He certainly wasn't going to be there for her to help raise me along with the other five children living in that tiny house.

The rest of the school year finished up and I was off for the summer. I sat in the back yard just two months after Arlene had been killed.

I was busy cursing God that day. Outloud, I cursed him repeatedly. I cried and cried and cursed him over and over again. I kept asking God, why her and not me? Why did he take her?

The neighbors thought I had lost my mind, finally cracked. My mom could not console me. She wasn't good at trying to make a person feel better and started to become angry and abusive towards me because I was slipping into a depression.

My mom was always depressed and suffered from all types and levels of depression. Suicidal thoughts and threats were common place with her.

"I'll just kill myself," she would say, "I should have killed myself years ago!" This was just accepted as normal behavior and conversation at our house, unless she changed it to, "I should have killed you years ago," when talking to me.

Deserie had come home for the funeral and it was nice to see her. I missed my best friends. Summer was dismal. I stayed indoors most of the time, sitting in the living room watching Howard pass out on the couch, "Popped one too many pills," he would mumble.

My dad was always busy doing his own thing. I sat in the chair watching television and eating potato chips day in and day out until one day my

brother and his friend walked in, picked up the television, carried it out of the house and sold it for drug money ... right in the middle of my show.

It was looking like another boring summer when suddenly I heard a knock on the front door. I answered it, looking at Dianna. I knew who this girl was immediately.

She lived just two blocks away by the park and was one of the girls I would see at the bus stop. We went to the same high school, but we never really talked. I was always too busy with Arlene and Deserie, and she was a couple of years younger than me.

"Hi," I said. "What are you doing?" she asked. "Just hanging out," I said. "I heard about your friend," she said looking at me sadly. "Wanna hang out?" she asked. "Sure..." I said, opening the screen door I stepped out on the porch, "What do you wanna do?" she asked.....that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship!

There Are Laws Against Child Abuse

Chapter 10

"YOU'RE GOING! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER WORD COME OUT OF YOUR GOD DAMN MOUTH!!!!!" my mom yelled. "I don't want to go over there. I'm just going to stay and hang out on the block," I said with a bit of attitude in my voice.

My oldest sister had invited us to her place for dinner and I didn't feel like doing the "let's pretend we're a family" thing. "I DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT YOU WANT.. YOU'RE GOING!" my mom shouted out the screen door.

Dianna and I were on the front porch. It was a cool October evening and we were waiting to go and roll a joint and just hang around. "Just tell her you're not going," Di said, not realizing the scope of danger I had been in all my life. "I don't know why she cares all the sudden what I'm doing?" I said sarcastically, "She has never given a shit before! Why can't you and dad go?"

I yelled loud enough so my mom could hear me. I was pissed off.

I had been smoking dope, drinking and doing drugs for four years at this point, and she had continually thrown me out of the house for four years. Now she wants to start telling me what I can do and can't do? She never cared if I came home before and now she's going to try to control me? I was getting more upset just thinking about it.

I went in the house and Di following behind me. I was going to go into my bedroom and get my jacket and shoes when my mom came up behind me and slammed me in the back with her fist as hard as she could, right square in the middle. The blow sent me to the ground, down two stairs, and into my bedroom. I was shocked. I really hadn't expected that. She grabbed me by my hair, cursed me, backhanded me, and was going to kick my ass again, when Di quickly spoke up, "There are laws against child abuse you know?" My mom looked at her and hollered, "Get out of MY HOUSE!!!" she said. Di left immediately and I grabbed my jacket, pushed past my mom and ran out the door, slamming the screen door,

"FFFFUCCCCCKKKKKK
YYYYYOOOOOOUUUUUU! YOU GOD
DAMN BITCH!" I screamed at the top of my
lungs, flipping my mom off.

That was the first time I had cursed my mom or
showed my feelings of anger toward her for the
way she had been treating me from the
beginning. It felt good to get mad.

It was the middle of October, it was getting cold,
and I was barefoot. I caught up with Di and we
walked over to her place, smoking a joint on the
way. "You have to stand up for yourself, Laurie.
You can't let your mom treat you that way," she
said. She was 14 and in the 10th grade. I was 16
and a senior in high school.

We walked into her house and her mom was
home. She was a sheriff and her step-dad was
there. He was an ex-con. Di told them what had
happened as my face was swollen and my back
was killing me.

They made a space for me on one of the couches
in the living room. "Here sweetie," Di's mom
passed over a can of coke and the big bowl of
popcorn. They were watching a movie when

suddenly there was a knock at the door. It was my dad.

Richard, the ex-con, looked out the window. He opened the door, "What do you want?" he said with a tone of "I'm not taking any shit from you, old man." My dad ignored his tone and said, "I'm looking for my daughter. Her mom wants her to come with us." Richard turned to look at me and I shook my head no. "She's staying here with us. She said she does not want to go with you!" my dad didn't have any choice, but to leave without me.

Richard closed the door, "Do your parents slap you around like that all the time?" he asked. "Not so much anymore, but yeah, they used to beat the shit out of me for nothing." I replied.

Di's mom grew up in the neighborhood and used to hang around with my oldest sister. "You should have seen what you're old man did to your sister, Irene?!" I knew that my sister had hung around with Di's mom, Sarah, way back when they were in high school, but I didn't know she knew about our fights at home.

My dad had come home from work early one day and saw my sister, Irene, out in the front yard talking with her friends. My dad told her to go in the house, but she did not listen to him and he went ballistic. He attacked her, tore her shirt and bra off, and threw her into the street.

Irene married and left the house by the age of 17. She avoided our parents like the plague and was busy raising two boys of her own now. I did not even know she was my sister until one day, when I was five-years old, I asked my mom who that lady was that kept bringing over those kids.

Irene was married and moved out before I was born. When I think about it long enough, she was the smart one. She was smart enough to remove herself from a bad situation.

Some Wheels, Bad Habits & a Chip On My Shoulder

Chapter 11

I got a job that year working with my mom. I had never had a real job before and had only worked doing some odd neighborhood jobs like watering lawns, raking leaves or cutting grass for money.

Both my mom and my sister, Kathi, thought I should start working to stay out of trouble. They convinced me it would be good for me to work with my mom. I guess I gave in and I convinced myself it would be good for our relationship, but in the back of my mind I had my doubts.

I knew firsthand how the least little event would set my mom off. My thoughts were, if she smarted off at work, everyone would know what goes on behind closed doors at home. That scared me. Everyone in our neighborhood knew "our little family secret," but that didn't mean the rest of the world had to know as well.

It was a part-time job that consisted of only 24-hours a week, but the pay was decent with Saturday and Sunday off. It seemed like it was going to work out.

The company agreed to hire me as long as my mom and I kept our relationship on a professional level. We agreed that we could do that or so I hoped.

I didn't even make it through my first week when my mom started pulling her shit again. She did not like my attitude and had raised her hand to backhand me in front of customers. One of our co-workers had to step in between my mom and I. She grabbed my mother's hand and told her that was not acceptable in this office, and that it was also not acceptable to do that to a girl my age.

I was nearly seventeen and she was still thinking it was okay to beat on me. I worked the entire winter that year, saved up enough money to buy a used car, and convinced my parents to let me apply for my learners permit.

I bought a 1972 Chevy Nova. The owner of the car was a mechanic and the engine was quite powerful ...V-8 and in great shape. The body needed some work, but I did not care. It was freedom to me. I got my license and the streets of Albuquerque were never safe again for a long time. It was just an extension of the freedom I had longed for, but behind the wheel of an incredibly powerful vehicle it proved dangerous and almost deadly.

Di and I were inseparable. We would be out all night partying, driving around, and going up into the foothills of the Sandia Mountains to look at the city lights. We were just gone all the time. We were never home anymore and I was relieved.

The next summer I graduated. Seventeen years old, a car, money, bad habits and a chip on my shoulder. It was not a good combination. I started staying over at Di's most of the time. I went home sometimes, but did not hang around long. A quick shower, change of clothes.

My mom knew I was getting high and she told me that she wished I would not do it. I

told her I would stop, but I knew I wouldn't. Getting high was the only escape I had to forgetting about my awful childhood and all the abuse I had suffered.

Di and I started to experiment with LSD, Acid, and other hallucinogens. We hung around with a crowd of drug users. They were all my good friends, many of them came from abusive homes that were actually worse than mine. I was older than most and tried to help them out as much as I could. We shared some good times together.

My mom and I, even though we were working side-by-side still, did not spend a lot of time together. I was not about to get too close to her emotionally and have her set me up to fall.

She was still full of hatred, mean as hell, and very depressed. She would say things like, "You'll never make it", "You're just a piece of shit", "You're worthless" and I still only dealt with her in small doses. I avoided her at all costs whenever possible.

I was thinking about moving into a place with Di. We were going to get an apartment

as her relationship with her step-dad was not great either. He wanted her mom all to himself and was always trying to push Di and her sister out of the picture.

When I turned eighteen, Di and I got into some crazy stuff. We were experimenting with mushrooms and everything under the sun. We even found ourselves going on the Kirkland Air force Base and driving through restricted areas. We lived very carelessly and dangerously.

Once, a bunch of us went to the base and we were sitting at the edge of the runway where the air force jets would land. As they would come in, the rocks and sand on the ground would lift into the air to create a whirlwind of flying rocks, and dust. We were just hanging out and getting stoned when suddenly the military police pulled up, jumped out of their vehicles and had their guns drawn on each one of us.

“Turn around, face west, put your hands in the air and do not move! Spread your legs! If you make a move, we have the authority to shoot you!!!!” We all did exactly as they

said. We lined up, faced west, and looked at the awesome sunset while getting searched and cuffed.

It was the first time I had ever been arrested. They took us in for questioning and eventually let us go, but we had to sign a paper saying that we would never come back on the base again.

I was the only one over the age of 18 who would have served time. There was a possible 5-year jail sentence along with a \$20,000 fine for being in a restricted area. Needless to say, we never did that again. My life continued on a dead end road, though...

“Let’s go get batteries,” I told Di and a couple of guys we knew. I wanted to get batteries for my boom box. We had been drinking some mickeys, smoking weed, of course, and I hit some water and gravel. I was going too fast for the curve in the road, but I had a plan. I was going to steer the car into the park and avoid the trees.

Erin panicked and grabbed the wheel and jerked it, I tried to recover from it, but it was too late and we slammed head on into a tree.

Lucky Number 13

Chapter 12

Light was shining in my eyes, and I could hear someone talking to me, but I was not able to comprehend what they were saying. Suddenly I heard someone instructing me to turn over any illegal drugs I had on me. I reached into my pocket, pulled out my bag of weed and handed it over.

"Have you been drinking tonight?" the voice coming in a little clearer. I nodded. Chainsaws buzzed loudly, "Stay with me sweetheart! You're not leaving again, are you?" The woman police officer asked.

No, I thought. Wow, this was weird. I had no idea what had happened. I could now make out the flashing red lights rotating everywhere on the police cars. I looked up and I could see the firemen trying to wrench the car door open, but it was crumpled and jammed. They were using the jaws of life to

try and bend the steel back enough to get me out.

I became aware that I was lying down on my side on the floor of the front seat, my leg partway under the engine manifold. They had to pull me out from the passenger side of the vehicle. "Lucky number 13," the ambulance technician said as he shut the door behind us. "You guys are very lucky to be coming out of that one!" he roared to me, smiling and trying to make me feel better. "Is there a full moon tonight?" He asked his partner riding in the front seat.

I woke up to curtains and a white ceiling, my mom and dad standing over me, and a lot of confusion. "Is everyone okay?" I quickly asked my mom. "Yes, they are all okay," she mumbled and I could tell she was upset. The police had phoned and told them what had happened. It was 11p.m. when the accident happened; it was now 4a.m. and there were no beds available.

The doctors had come in, looked at my leg and walked out; came back in and looked at my leg again and walked out. Finally, after

another hour of waiting, a bed was available. My parents immediately got ready to head home after saying a few choice words to me. I was then wheeled up to my room, given a healthy dose of morphine, and I was gone. The next 48- hours were a complete blur.

I was finally coherent enough for the doctor to tell me what was happening. They could not operate due to the fact that I was in shock, and were waiting for my vitals to stabilize before proceeding. My doctor was the number one trauma surgeon in the Four Corners area of the Southwest USA. He was the top dog out of all trauma surgeons in California, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico and he just happened to be on call at the hospital the night that the ambulance brought us in.

They asked me which hospital I wanted to go and I chose Presbyterian. My doctor kept trying to reassure me that he would do everything he could to save my foot, but if the surgery did not go well, the foot would have to come off.

When the car hit the tree, I had apparently pulled my arms up to protect my face from the steering wheel. The force from hitting the tree head on had been hard enough to shove my foot straight through the steel floor board and directly into the engine. It was still attached to my body, but my ankle bones were smashed and splintered into tiny pieces. It was now barely connected to my leg by the skin, muscles and tendons, but the bones had been completely detached from my leg bone.

I was so upset about my friends being in the car wreck with me. My best friend, Di, was having a knee operation. My friend, Erin, who was in the front seat was having his thumb operated on as he had practically gone through the windshield. The other guy in the backseat was so loaded he did not get hurt at all, but suffered from trauma.

I was on 24-hour morphine because the pain would have killed me, the doctors said. They took me down for a full body scan during those first few hours and I remember sitting up to do part of them. The x-ray technician was a nice guy and was trying to cheer me up.

He was looking through his equipment at my head, neck and spine. As he was looking at the x-rays he said, "Whoa, whoa, wait a minute, sweetie." He seemed alarmed and said, "What do we have here? The xrays don't tell lies!" he exclaimed to me. "You were either a very clumsy girl as a child, or you suffered physical abuse to your head, neck, and your spinal column?"

I looked at him shocked and whispered, "A little of both." He jotted down a few notes and kept shaking his head in dismay. I was then pushed through the tunnel for the full body scan. He was not impressed and I was very embarrassed.

Day three, 72-hours later and they finally decided to operate. My doctor thoroughly explained to me what was going to happen. He said he was hopeful that he could save my foot and for me to try not to worry. I should be waking up to see my toes.

I was put under and the surgery ensued. Nine-hours later, after my doctor had spent 7-hours with three other surgeons picking out

bone and rebuilding my ankle, they were done. It took 9-hours to completely rebuild.

I remember waking up briefly and then I was unconscious for the next 24-hours due to heavy sedation.

On day five I woke up in a hospital room with my ankle bandaged and elevated in a sling up in the air. There is a lot of activity and commotion. Nurses and attendees started to come in and check on me. Family and friends dropped in.

I was a mess and my face was a big, purple and black mess, my teeth were pushed back in my head and my chest consisted of the same color of purple and black. My arms were very lumpy, swollen, and black from hitting the steering wheel. The skin on both of my legs was gone from the shins down as a result of the impact. It had caused my jeans to rub against the skin hard enough to peel the entire top layer.

I was still on huge doses of morphine and did not feel like seeing anyone. All I wanted to do was sleep. People were coming in to try

and cheer me up and all I could do was sit there in anger and feeling so down about hurting my friends. The guilt was overwhelming. I definitely had the blues.

My doctor, who performed the surgery, came in and told me off while examining my ankle again. "Do you realize how many years you have taken off your life?" he asked impatiently.

He looked like a father would look at his own child when disappointed. "You've definitely shortened your lifespan. You will be crippled when you get older. Your hip will give out and you will have to use a cane, then a walker. You need to stop smoking dope and straighten up your act, young lady!" he said looking at me with a caring look on his face.

"I told your parents that they should have done a better job looking after you, sweetheart. I told them that they had better start now," he walked around to the vitals chart. "I'll see you in three days, at my office.

Your parents have the information and said they would make sure you get over to see me." And, with that, he signed the discharge papers and wandered out of the room.

On day eight, I was discharged. They had put a hard cast on my ankle from my toes to my knee. I had to be on crutches and for the first week home I slept and tried to cope with the crutches. My parents told me I could stay with them as long as I needed to, as I had previously planned to move out with Di that month. I was shocked at their caring disposition, but it was a welcomed change considering the circumstances.

Two weeks after my accident, I went back to work. My parents had to go to court for me while I was in the hospital. They pleaded on my behalf, as it was my first accident. I was charged with reckless driving, driving while intoxicated, driving under the influence of a narcotic, destruction to public property which carried a minimum \$20,000 fine or 2 years in jail. It eventually got thrown out of court. I was spared again.

My friends parents were not too happy with me. My parents were worried about being sued. I had the minimum insurance, but at least I had insurance. It covered all of my friends care, and part of mine. I ended up with a hospital and doctor bill totaling over \$10,000. I was going to need extensive physical therapy for the entire next year, which made my out of pocket expenses over \$14,000.00. I did not care about the money, though. I just did not want my friends to hate me. The guilt ate at me for months to come.

My friends did eventually forgive me and even made it a point to say that they knew I was a crazy driver and they chose to get in the car with me. They did not want to see me suffer anymore than I already had. They all settled out of court and took the money my insurance company offered them with no problems. All the cases were closed.

Words To Mend My Heart

Chapter 13

“This is awesome guys!” Everyone was in Di’s living room as I came in the door. Someone handed me a big bottle of Jack Daniels and everyone began cheering me, telling me how happy they were I was alive. Someone shouted let’s get this party started. It was 10a.m and we were going to have fun!

“Fuck yah!!” I raised my bottle and drank from it straight, no chaser. The party was on. Just about everyone there had a bottle and we were so tanked. I was 18 and everyone else was 17 or 18, and the legal drinking age was 21.

I had only been out of the hospital one month. Di, as well and I, were going to be on crutches for at least a year, and a hard cast for 8 months. I was getting so loaded I couldn’t even walk on my crutches. I had to go to work by 5p.m. and one our friends said he would drive me. We were all so tanked

that when I finally made it out to the truck, I fell down face first in the gutter and passed out. Some of my friends came out and picked me up off the ground. They stood me up against the truck, but I fell down again in the gutter and just layed there until they came and physically put me in the truck.

Tony dropped me off at work and I was hopping to the back room to clock in and fell down in the hall and passed out. Someone came and picked me up, and I passed out until it was time for me to go home. I had drank that whole bottle of Jack Daniels and had alcohol poisoning.

My body was not ready to handle that kind of treatment as I was still recovering from surgery. I was sick for three days, sleeping and throwing up, sleeping and throwing up. It was a bad situation.

My mom was pissed at me, telling me I was making wrong choices, but I didn't care. I told her off, "It's my life, I can do what I want!" I said. "You guys have already screwed my life up so bad that what I'm doing now is nothing. What's the

difference?" I yelled at my mom. She didn't know what to say and, for the first time ever, she was speechless.

One year later I was done with the crutches and the cast was off, but it was still painful to even put my foot on the ground. Walking on it almost killed me. It took another year just to rehabilitate it again in physical therapy. Ice baths, hot baths, electromagnetic therapy treatments and physical exercise.

By the time I was 19, I was working three jobs and had a car. I wanted to pay my car off and pay my doctor off as quickly as possible. Three jobs does not leave a whole lot of time to sleep so I started doing speed. Smoking massive amounts of pot and cigarettes, some times three packs a day. Speed and then sleep for three hours and then back at it. I still had lots of time to party. I used to fall asleep at the wheel, and almost wrecked my car again a number of times, but I still hadn't learned my lesson.

I was still living at home when Di suddenly moved in with her new boyfriend, Dan. He was a coke head and a speedballer. Heavy

duty drugs. We started partying all the time and things were getting out of control. I could not keep up with the three jobs, and had to let one go.

I eventually took a small break and flew out to see Deserie. She was divorced with three children now and living in Oklahoma. It felt so good to see her, B.J. and Olan. It was like going home. I really missed her and her kids were precious. Her parents wanted to hear about all the stuff that had happened since Arlene's funeral.

I told them everything and they had some great heart to heart talks with me. They told me it was not my fault. I did not deserve to be treated the way I had. They told me that they wished I was their daughter and that they would have been proud to have me for a daughter.

They talked to me about my mom's suffering, and told me that the only way I was going to make it was to trust in God, trust the Lord, and learn to love myself, or I would not be able to love anyone.

They told me not to have hatred in my heart. Not to carry any responsibility for the hurt my parents caused me as it was not my fault. I told them how much they meant to me and, from the first time they invited me over for dinner and had set a place for me at their table, I had never felt so welcomed anywhere before.

That was the first time I was made to feel wanted and appreciated. I will never forget it, and even to this day I can remember that meal they shared with me.

Good Trips, Bad Trips and a Band

Chapter 14

“Anything happening yet?” Di asked, changing the radio station. “No”, I replied, “I don’t feel anything yet.” “Maybe we should eat some more?” Di passed me the freezer bag full of mushrooms. “Okay, but man this could be a bad trip” I said, stuffing magic mushrooms in my mouth.

We had been waiting for at least an hour before we started to feel the effects from the mushrooms. I was still on crutches and it was late summer. We were over at Di’s house watching the “Love Boat” and when the song came on we started laughing. We laughed and laughed through the entire show and then kept on laughing. Her mom knew something was up, but wasn’t sure just what.

I decided I had better go home as I started to trip out hard. I left and began walking home on my crutches. Di’s place was two blocks from mine and as I was walking down the street, I could hear something behind me, and

as I looked back I saw hundreds of black cats with silver tipped nails running towards me, sparks flying from their nails as they clawed the street, “Wow!! This is awesome.” It did not frighten me to see them and they ran past me and disappeared out of sight.

I kept walking and it was not that late, but it was dark, and I saw an ugly, beat up, olive green van drive by me and slow down. I started to get a little nervous as it looked like the one that had chased me when I was about eleven-years old. I had gone to the dentist by myself to get my teeth filled that day and it had scared the hell out of me.

The office had been only a few blocks from our house, and my parents did not care if I was out walking to the next planet, so I was used to doing things on my own quite frequently.

I came out of the dentist’s office and began walking up the busy street. A van slowly drove past me, drab olive green in color, and a man was shouting at me from the passenger side window. I did not want to know what he said. I then saw them slow down, as if to pull

over to grab me, so I ran back into the dentist's office.

The receptionist said I could sit there, so I waited. After awhile, I went back outside and the van was just coming down the side street where I was standing. I could not go back in the door quickly enough so I ducked down and ran behind some bushes and kept out of sight. That was so scary.

It was not the first time I had been nearly kidnapped, and it would not be the last. So, as I was walking down the road, hopping along on my crutches, 18 ½ years old, having eaten enough hallucinogenic mushrooms for twenty people, I was a bit nervous at suddenly seeing this van.

I could not run because I was on crutches and my ankle was still in a hard cast. Well, not two minutes later I see the same van, cruising by me, slowing down enough to just keep pace with me and I panicked. I ran home in extreme pain, with my crutches in my hands. I went into my room and tried to slow my breathing down.

I decided to turn some music on and it was the group “Black Sabbath” and the song, “Born Again”. I turned the music off and sat back on my bed, my ankle was hurting so bad from running on it, but I just tried to relax. Di and I “fried” for three whole days after that. That was the extent of my eighteenth year in life. Nineteen would prove to be a whole lot more fun.

Di had decided to take up drums and I bought a guitar later that fall. We did not know how to play them, but we were determined to be rock stars, heavy metal chicks! A good friend of ours would come over and try to teach me guitar. He managed to teach me how to play some Judas Priest and Ozzy songs and it was great. His name was Robert Pinette. He was brutally murdered after I moved to Canada, shot down in his driveway, a drug deal gone bad.

Di’s next door neighbor showed her how to play the drums. She went out and bought drum sheet music and taught herself how to read it and she eventually came a drummer. I had always enjoyed singing and we would practice during the day when her mom was

not home and then we would go to work. She got a job working at a thriftstore with me on the weekends, and we would eat our shrooms, drop acid and anything else we could get our hands on and fry.

The Supervisor of the store knew that we were into music and we were trying to get a band together. She had a daughter who was also putting a band together. I had graduated with her daughter, Tammy, and had seen her around at school, but we did not know each other. Her mom set up a meeting for us to talk about joining Tammy's band.

I'm Already Dead....You Can't Kill Me

Chapter 15

She pulled the gun out of the holster, loaded it, took the safety off and ran out of the room. I was left standing there holding their 8 month old daughter, Tabatha. She was crying out and I was doing my best to comfort her.

"Shit... she's gonna blow him away!!!" Di's sister said to me as she came back into the room where I was sitting, rocking Tabatha. "Is she okay?" Shannon asked. "She's fine, poor baby...I hope Di doesn't do anything stupid!?" I said, handing the baby to Shannon. "I'll go and see what's going on." I quickly left the house and went searching. I walked down the street, but there was no sign of anyone.

I went back to the house and just a few minutes later Di's mom and Di were coming back in the door. Di's mom was a sheriff and Di had grabbed her gun and was going to

shoot her boyfriend. He had beat the shit out of her again and in public this time.

He should have gone to jail. The cops had him cuffed, in the police car, but Di's mom did not think he should go to jail and convinced Di to drop the charges. I could not believe how messed up that evening was. He should have paid for his actions. How could she convince her own daughter to set him free? It was so unfair to Di. She didn't deserve that!

The last six months had been like that since I had got home from visiting Deserie and her family in Oklahoma. I came back to a non stop party that went from one month to the next, every kind of drug you could think of, and the scene was going from bad to worse.

I was turning twenty that winter. Di's apartment was where the "party" always was. We were all over there, doing coke and drinking Bacardi 151. Di's boyfriend was shooting up and ended up overdosing. He passed out on the floor, but we just continued to party. Eventually he woke up and began running around the apartment smashing the

television, throwing the table, and even picked up a chair and hit Di with it. She took off out the door and everyone else was quick to follow. I knew Di had her fill of his violent actions and the others now feared, with Di out of the picture, he may lash out at them. It was a bad situation for all involved.

I was looking feverishly for my car keys when he suddenly grabbed me and slammed me up against the wall. "I should kill you..." he said as he choked me. "I could you know...I could kill you!"

I told him "Go ahead...I'm already dead, you asshole! You can't kill me...I'm like your only friend," I told him. "You wanna treat me like this when I'm your only God damn friend?????" I was upset and reaching my boiling point.

As my anger grew, I could feel his pain and could easily relate to familiar abusive situations I endured at home. He grew up in an abusive home. It got so bad, he and his sister took their parents to court for custody. They won and his sister had won legal

custody of him. Knowing his story, I believe that saved his life.

He couldn't wear shorts or swim in public because his dad had beaten him so much he was scarred for life. He knew my story, we had talked many times as I tried to help him get his life straightened out. He let me go... "Where's Di??" He asked, looking around at the ghost town. Everyone had left and it was just him and I now. "She's probably here somewhere?" I tried to reassure him, but he went running outside yelling for her.

Feeling safe, I took the opportunity to grab my purse, keys, the rest of the bottle of Bacardi 151 and headed out the door. "Sssshh..." Di was kneeling down by my car. I opened the door and got in casually. I didn't want to alert him, further trying protecting her safety.

I started my car and she was laying down as best as she could in the front seat. I locked my doors, and pulled out of the driveway. I had just started to pull away when her boyfriend, Dan, shoved his arm through my

window and punched me violently in the face. He grabbed my keys and turned off the engine. I was dazed. Di was freaking out. "Do not get out of the car, Di!!" I remember yelling at her as she jumped out and tried to escape.

He threw my keys and chased after her. She had made it around to the other side of the building before I lost site of her. I jumped out of my car, ran and found my keys, through the bottle of alcohol on the ground and jumped back into my car, driving off hoping to find Di somewhere.

She came running around the other side of the building and jumped into my car and we were gone. I was so sick and tired of living with violence. I had tasted violence from the time I was a very little girl and I was so tired of it. I wanted a normal life and, most of all, I wanted to enjoy life. I had seen many times before how quickly life can be given and taken away in the blink of an eye. When it all boiled down to it, I just wanted to travel, do fun things, and be a woman.

I never had any boyfriends. In fact, I simply hated the thought of a man even touching me. I had a crush on lots of boys, and even a few short lived make out sessions, but they never got past first base. These boys left my life as fast as they came into it.

I found it extremely hard, and for some reason I could not connect with my feelings regarding my own body. I had been mistreated all my life. I guess after being told I was ugly, worthless, a piece of shit, and molested it had eventually taken it's toll on me, my outlook on life, and my self esteem.

I had witnessed my dad forcing himself on my mother against her will. No matter how you look at it, plain and simple, it was rape. It was what I grew up with and it was all that I knew, but I wanted no part of it.

I don't know why, but Di stayed with her boyfriend. I kept telling her it was not a good place for her or her baby, but she would not listen to me. I know she loved her baby girl and wanted a better life for her, but I had hoped it wouldn't take long for her to realize that she had to make a change. Although she

loved Dan, she knew her and her daughter deserved a better life yet she never took the initiative to better herself.

Later that year I was on my way home from work. I came through the front door and into the living room at my parents place. I had just paid off all of my doctors bill and was still living at home. My mom's health was deteriorating fast and she was now on oxygen.

I guess I stayed thinking I was protecting her. It was still in my mind to try and protect her as much as I could from my dad.

My brother Chesley had told me to "Be a good girl and help our mom" when I was a little girl. I wanted to please him by doing as he asked, as Chess was the only person in my family who would stick up for me. He was the only one who told me I was a nice girl, that I was pretty or that he loved me.

Anytime my dad would start his crap I would tell him to back off. I had taken control of the situation. I was too old to push around at this

point or beat on. My parents knew how serious I was.

As I shut the front door behind me, I noticed my mom was crying and sobbing uncontrollably. "Your brother Rob killed himself!!" she cried out to me. "He committed suicide; they found his body this morning," she was crying, sobbing, tears pouring down her cheek.

I was absolutely speechless. I just did not know what to say or what to do. I said "Great...that's just fuckin' great news!" I said. "I'm going out... I'll see you later" I said. My mom was crying..."Where are you going??" she asked continuing to cry. "Don't you care???"

I turned around and screamed at her as loud as I could, "It's all your and dad's fault and now you are going to cry about it? It's a little late, isn't it??" I was pissed off. I left the house and went to my friend, Elaine's.

I slowly drove up to her place and knocked on her door. As she told me to come in and immediately blurted out, "My brother killed

himself," "Man, that's the shits!" she said
passing me a big, fat joint. We sat back and
got stoned while watching the sunset.

The Truth Shall Make Me Free

Chapter 16

"How much will you give me for it?" I asked. "The most I can do is one fifty," the pawn dealer said as he carefully checked out the amp and guitar. "Is that the best you can do?" I was hoping for twice that amount. "Yes, take it or leave it, that's all I'm giving for these," he said very professionally.

He knew he had me over a barrel and I desperately needed the money. "Alright..." I said giving in to his offer. I then proceeded to take the money, left the pawn shop, jumped in my car and drove home.

No one was there except my cat, Zeus. He had been with me since we lived on La Veta Street. We had moved away from the block almost two years before to the southeast part of the city-- "gang land" as I call it. Gangs walked around swinging chains, bats, and weapons. Mattresses and other debris would be set on fire almost daily and left burning in the street. Store clerks were held up at

gunpoint on a regular basis. It was not a pleasant condition and was extremely dangerous.

My friend Mike had been held up at gunpoint three times in the past 3-weeks in a convenience store two blocks from me where he worked part-time. I wasn't scared as I had grown up with my life being threatened by two of the biggest monsters I could think of. They were harmless now, though, being too old and too mellowed out to get overly abusive about anything; although my mother still loved to get her digs in when possible. They were at my brothers funeral in Canada.

My sister was due in January and it was already October. She was six months pregnant, but she still went to the funeral with my parents. I did not go as it was decided that I should stay and look after the cat, and also the fact that no one had any money for travel expenses.

I did not have a dime to my name and had to pawn my amp and guitar just to pay for my car insurance that month. My days of partying were just about over as I thought

about my brother and how he had ended his life so abruptly. Rob was a coke head and had been for years. He was often homeless and could not keep a regular job for very long. Howard was the same way, although he was just a pill popper, but homeless on the streets of Calgary just the same.

Rob had tried to kill himself many times before. On one occasion he almost succeeded, but made the mistake of calling us from Canada.

He had slit his wrists and was bleeding to death, but decided to phone my mom. She got him to tell her where he was at the time as he was homeless and had been using drugs for years. She put me on the phone with him and I talked to him while she went across the street to a neighbors to use their phone.

She then called our oldest brother, Kevin, who was living in Calgary and told him the information. Kevin then phoned the ambulance and brother was saved just in time.

While I had been talking on the phone to my dying brother, he said some very strange things to me, but I thought it was because he was high or because he was hallucinating from losing all the blood he had already lost.

He said to me, whispering into the phone, "Your skin was so soft, so soft, and smooth." I was just going along with it as I had talked to Rob and Howard when they were on drugs before and knew the scenario very well. We used to sit in the back yard and discuss politics, the government and our crazy parents for hours when they were high. I used to have to talk my brother out of robbing stores, blowing peoples homes up, stabbing my sister and these types of crazy things. I should have gone into the Police Force Special Teams Unit to talk people out of these types of situations because I definitely had the experience needed.

I was twelve-years old the last time I had seen Rob as he had went back to Canada and did not return to visit us. "Your skin was so smooth," he whispered, "not in a baby smooth way, but a sexual way," he said to me. I was suprised to hear him say that to me as I had

fully blocked out that memory of someone sexually abusing me when I was a young girl---until now.

I thought it had been my dad, and wanted to blame my dad for it, but as I grew older each year it seemed more likely that my brother was the one who raped me. I used to sleep with my blankets wrapped tightly around my body like a mummy for years after and as a young adult I did not like anyone touching me.

One time in junior high a young guy came up to me and as a sad, but silly joke, grabbed my crotch and then took off. It was the thing guys were doing in those days. I got so upset that I chased him down and kicked him in the balls as hard as I could. Then when he fell down to the ground in pain, I beat the crap out of him.

My shop teacher saw what happened and ran over to break it up and calm me down. I do not remember the boy's name, but he apologized to me and stayed clear of me for the rest of his life.

What I do remember about the sexual abuse I suffered is fragmented and not very clear as I had blocked it out for many years. I can remember biting either his nose or his ear as hard as I could and was punched in the face because of it.

I know that I wanted to believe it was my dad because I hated my dad already and I loved my brother, Rob. I hated my dad for what he did to my mother, to our brothers, to our family, and the lack of real fatherly love and care he had shown for all those years.

I would eventually come to realize, many years later, that he did not have the skills or the ability to be a father. And, even to this day, does not understand the pain he put his family through. My dad talks about the "good old days" with a gleam in his eye, and when he mentions his youth it was always the best. They were poor, but they had a great life he says.

I heard other stories about his parents that are quite conflicting, so my dad and I do not talk about his past or our family's past to this day. My mom told me years ago that, when she

was growing up, she was beat on and whipped on a regular basis. Her mother was very abusive towards her, her husband and all their children.

My grandmother horsewhipped my uncle, forced him to sleep in the bitter cold and he died. She apparently had no remorse. She horsewhipped my mother for no reason, too, and who knows what else she did to her children.

My grandmother took in a bunch of orphans from an orphanage that was overcrowded back in the 1930's. My mom was born in 1927, my dad 1923...during the Great Depression Era. My mom and dad lived in neighboring counties in Nova Scotia.

My mom lived in Amherst Head on a farm and my dad in Springhill N.S., and then Amherst. My grandmother had taken these orphans in to help on the farm, but most of them ran away and took their chances on the road due to my grandmother beating and whipping them like dogs, my mother said.

My mom and my grandmother did not speak for many years. I met my grandmother when she came to visit when I was 12-years old and I did not like her at all. Even to this day I cannot bring my heart to like or accept her. She was the only grandparent I got to meet as the rest had all passed on either before I was born or shortly after. It was all passed on from generation to generation, this horrible disease called "hatred."

My mom said that she hated my dad for the way he treated her and the family, but I know that she loved him. She just hated his actions. I grew to understand this myself. I searched my heart for many years and thought about what I was feeling and tried to make sense of it all.

My entire life consisted of hatred, anger, sadness and despair. I thought about the way my mom had treated me. She did not treat my sister, Kathi, that way. She had only slapped Kathi around a little, but I never saw her beating on her with a belt, a table leg, a rolling pin, or her fists. She truly loved Kathi and I feel it was because Kathi was not born out of marital rape, as I was.

My mom just could not deal with have to see me as she hated the very act that produced me. Every time she looked at me was a brutal reminder of the abuse she suffered (and the abuse I would eventually suffer from because of it). I realize that this is not my fault, and neither was all of the abuse I had received from my parents and brother, but there was no excuse for it. Dysfunctional families will continue to run from generation to generation until someone makes a stand and put a stop to it. The cycle has to end somewhere.

At the age of 21 I finally quit partying. I used money I would have usually bought drugs with to buy some travelogues and began to stay home and let my heart begin to heal from the 21-years of emotional pain it had gone through. I needed to let my body heal from the 16-years of physical abuse it had gone through. I had to clean up from the nearly 9-years of drug abuse it had gone through. It was going to be a long road ahead, but I had all the time in the world and decided to start right then and there.

Curse, Yell and Smash

Chapter 17

"LISTEN TO YOURSELVES!!! THIS IS JUST BULLSHIT!!! I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU GUYS!!!! I screamed at my parents. My mom was in the kitchen crying again. The last few years had proved to be a challenge on my mom's health. She was still smoking and still on oxygen.

My dad's health was not an issue. He was fine as far as his physical health went, it was always his mental health that was in question. They were up to their same old shit again. I thought back to the year before.

I was still living at home and now almost 28-years old. I had quit doing drugs years before and seldom drank. I met a guy from Canada and had a two-year relationship with him. It was great at first, but it didn't last as he was an alcoholic and had been abused as a boy, ran away from home at thirteen and had never dealt with his behavioural issues. He

never hit me, though, because he knew about my abuse and I told him if he ever hit me it was over. I think he was afraid of me.

I was 22-years old and he was 29. We had gone camping in his camper and he started to belittle me and say that I was clumsy and breaking all of his things which was not true. I was so angry I threw my robe on, grabbed a hammer and took some of my things out in the National Park in the middle of the night and began smashing them with the hammer. He was afraid of my outrage. I was cursing and yelling and smashing and he just stood there and watched me in shock.

I was just doing what I had been taught to do all of my life--curse, yell and smash. He wanted to hit me, but instead punched the wall. We both knew it had to end. He loved me, I know he did. I loved him, but we would have ended up like my parents and his parents. He left, and when he did, he left a big hole in my heart. Seven years later I would meet another man who would fill that hole and make it all better.

I was 25-years old and working two jobs. I was working part-time at my oldest sister, Irene, and her husband's television and electronics repair shop.

Irene and Leo had asked me to come out to the front lobby to have a donut when a young man we knew came running into the shop. Ken had come to tell my sister that her son, Mike, had been killed the night before by a drunk driver. He, and his two good friends, had all been killed.

I laughed because I thought it was a joke, but it was real. Irene and Leo and my nephew, Danny, were completely devastated. We all were. We loved our nephew, Mike, a great deal and it was a hard blow to our family.

The next year I attended cooking school at a technical vocational school in Albuquerque. It was something completely different than what I had been doing which was office work. It was quite a challenge and I wanted to prove I could do something completely on my own. It was great and extremely fulfilling. I went to work in the Grand Canyon for nearly one year. I did a lot of

peaceful reflection there as it was very quiet and not a whole lot to do, but reflect.

I came back to Albuquerque and worked in a few restaurants and was home one day when the phone suddenly rang. My mom was still working and I was the only one home. It was my brother Kevin in Canada. "How's it going?" he asked. We rarely talked because he had moved out of the house when I was born and never came back. "Fine," I replied, happy to hear his voice.

"Howard is dead" he mumbled. I laughed. I thought no way, this is a joke. "No, it's not a joke. He's dead, Laurie. He died from a drug overdose in a homeless shelter in Calgary."

I was thinking, oh my God, my mom is just not going to be able to deal with this. We hung up and I went immediately to my mom's work to tell her what had happened. She left work early, in total shock, and came home with me.

It was a sad time. Howard had been in and out of jail, prison, shelters, drug abuse rehabs and hospitals. He had even lost some of his

fingers from frostbite from living on the streets of Calgary in the winter when temperatures dropped to -35C. He had been jumped, rolled, mugged, beaten and every other manner of horrible things that could have happened, had happened to him. He was such a nice guy, I thought. He just did not ever have a chance to live...that's all. I just could not believe that three of my brothers were now dead. It was extremely hard for me to comprehend this.

Just five months before, at Christmas time, Howard had phoned to ask my mom's permission to come home for Christmas. He had not been home since he left when I was 14-years old which was the last time I had seen him. He was asking me over the phone to ask my mom because she did not want to talk to him. I asked her, holding my hand over the phone, "Mom, Howard wants to come home for Christmas!!?" I said in a half pleading tone. "NO, it's just not going to happen." she yelled. "He'll cause trouble and I won't be able to control him," she said as she walked away.

I told her it would only be for a few days and then we could put him back on a plane. She would not go for it and refused to let him come home.

He died five months later in a shelter, feeling like the most unloved person on the planet, no doubt. I love you bro. Rest in peace.

Look At What You Have Done

Chapter 18

"FUCK YOU PEOPLE, I'M OUT OF HERE!!!!" I grabbed my purse and car keys and jumped into my car. I drove off listening to Pearl Jam's "Rearview Mirror" blasting from my speakers.

I was so pissed off, so absolutely angry. The last year had really pushed me to the ultimate limit. I had finally had enough. It was all the bullshit as I could take...And, I had reached my boiling point. I stayed away for quite a few days until I could calm down.

My mom had a stroke the day we got back from Howard's funeral. She survived the stroke, but the doctors said her hip had broke which caused her to fall.

She was now only a few years from seventy and her health had been an issue from before I was born. Her body was breaking down and her mental state as well. I tried to help her

the best I could. I stayed at the house, cooking for my mom, helping pay the bills and buying groceries. Someone had to be there with her all the time and my dad was working part-time at Walmart as a door greeter and security person.

We were trying to help my mother as much as we could, but she was so down and depressed and would not listen to her doctors or any of us.

I was sitting in the living room that evening when my parents started fighting and cursing each other again. My mom was at stroke level already and I did not want her to die from arguing with my dad. I was so tired of listening to their sick and disgusting banter about their sex life or the lack of it.

My mom's cursing got louder, my dad was on the defensive and the two of them were just getting started when I jumped up.

"THAT'S IT!!! THAT IS FUCKIN IT!!! I HAVE HAD ENOUGH.....!!! YOU TWO SHOULD LISTEN TO YOURSELVES!!!!"

I was angry and wanted to make them realize how they have affected my life and what two

selfish and ignorant bastards had done to their children.

"LOOOKKK ATTTT WHAT YOUUUUUU HAAVVVVEEEE DONE TOOOOO YOUR CHILDREN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" I screamed at them. They both stopped arguing and were just looking at me. "I AM SPEAKING FOR IRENE, KEVIN, CHESLEY, ROBERT, HOWARD, KATHI AND I... LOOK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO YOUR CHILDREN, YOU ASSHOLES!!!!!!!!!"

I began to throw and break things, most of which were mine. I threw newspapers around, threw my chair. My dad came in the living room and I told him to get out because I did not want to hurt him. I just wanted to make a point that enough was enough.

I went to my room and slammed the door. My mom went to her bedroom and was crying and saying she did not know why I would behave this way. After a couple of hours, I went into her room and sat on the edge of the bed and talked to her.

"I should have just killed myself!" she said. "I hate this life" she said while crying out of

control. "Well Mom, there has to be something in it that makes it all worth while?" I said trying to be nice. "What about your children? We should count for something, shouldn't we?" I asked.

"I never wanted any of you!" she said to me, cutting my heart at it's core. "I did not want a bunch of children. I wanted to be an artist." I said, "Well, all of your children loved you very much," I wanted to see what she would say. "You were all worthless, not one of you was worth a shit to me," she confessed without any remorse.

I winced. How could she say these horrible things to me. "Well, we had to count mom.... **YOU CANNOT TELL ME THAT WE DID NOT COUNT AT ALL!!!! OR THAT WE DID NOT MATTER AT ALL TO YOU, OR THAT YOU AND DAD PUT US THROUGH ALL OF THIS SHIT FOR NOTHING??!!!"** TELL ME WE COUNTED!!"

I was starting to yell and I could feel myself getting very angry. "You didn't count, none of you counted." she repeated and rolled

over. I left for the house for the night. I had to get out of that house. I was shocked, disgusted, angry, and hurt and just could not deal with anymore emotional abuse from my mother anymore. I went and got a motel room, driving like a crazy person with Pearl Jam's "Rear view Mirror" blasting as loud as my speakers would go.

I'm Going To Tell Them You Did It

Chapter 19

“Your mother’s fallen and hit her head,” my dad said urgently. “She probably threw herself down on purpose!” I suggested, reaching over to see what time it was. I was already half asleep when the phone rang.

I had phoned my sister to tell her where I was and gave her the hotel number. “We’re going to the hospital now. You better come.”

Hesitantly, I met them at the hospital. My mom’s head was bleeding and she was in a wheel chair waiting to see an emergency doctor. “I’m going to tell them you pushed me,” she said looking at me. “What? I was at the hotel! You can’t use me as a scapegoat on this one!” I replied.

My mother looked at me sheepishly and repeated, “Yep, I’m going to tell them you did it.” I looked at her and laughed, “Yeah,

you do that. And I'll tell them about all of the shit you did to me all these years!" I said.

She laughed at me, "Who are they going to believe? You or me? I'm an old, helpless lady. They aren't going to believe you!"

My dad told the doctors that he knew she had either fallen or purposely thrown herself down after I had left the house. My heart was broken. I knew I had to leave for good now. It was for the best for everybody involved. My mother was like cancer and she was infecting every inch of my body.

I decided to go to Canada. I was almost thirty-years old and I really needed to go and time the time heal and recover. I needed to get my own life and get away from my parents, away from all the drama, hurt and anger.

My mom was extremely upset with my decision. She said she would die if I moved to Canada. She warned me her death would be upon my head. "It will be all your fault!!" she screamed at me as I walked out the door that day. She even told me she would haunt

me to the day I die. I did not listen. I was done.

I kissed her goodbye, left and never looked back.

One year later she ended up in the hospital from a stroke. I immediately flew down to Albuquerque to see her. I sat by her bedside for about an hour, I held her hand, she could not talk much but managed to say that she had been a bad mother and that she did love us, but she never once apologized for the years of abuse she had put me through and even on her death bed would not take accountability for her actions or apologize for hurting me so badly.

I left with Kathi and Irene to go get a quick bite to eat. By the time we came back, she had slipped into a coma she would never completely recover from. She finally looked peaceful, I thought to myself. She remained hospitalized for a very long time.

Screaming To Get Out

Chapter 20

"All I know is that you had better get here as soon as you can!" I said, trying not to cry. "I just got here," Cecil said. "It's a two day trip back. I can't just turn around and leave?" he explained. "Well, there are no guarantees that I will be here when you get home." I said sharply with an air of coldness.

I was determined not to get hurt again. "Honey...wait a minute..." he said as I hung up the phone. I was nearly five months into the pregnancy and I had just lost our baby.

Cecil and I had met when I moved to Canada. We both ended up injured while working on a train out in the middle of northern Alberta hours from the city.

We ended up moving in together soon after when we went to Edmonton to go to the hospital. He had a hernia from lifting too many heavy groceries from the semi trailer

to the train. I had tendonitis in my wrist from carrying too heavy of trays through the train cars.

We were trying to make it work. I was in our apartment when I had suddenly felt sharp abdominal pains and then went into labor. I phoned my nurse and she told me to get to the emergency room if I was hemorrhaging, but I felt so sick I had just stayed in the apartment by myself.

I finally went to the hospital the next day. They ran tests and examined me, but they kept insisting there was NO baby...That I wasn't pregnant. I told them it had gone down the toilet while I was bleeding, but they did not pay any attention to what I was saying. They dismissed me and I went home in despair.

I was so down, and the worst part was they refused to listen to what I had to say. It was my one chance for motherhood and I had lost it. I got to feel what it was like to be a mother for five months and I really liked it. I desperately wanted to be a mother.

I did not get my hopes up too high as it was my first pregnancy and they told me to be prepared just in case I miscarried. I told them about my RH and they said we would deal with it when the time came.

Cecil had just gone up north to work in the oil rig camps and he was way up in the Northwest Territories. There was no way of getting out quickly from there unless it was a real emergency or a person had the money for a private jet flight, which we did not.

Cecil and I were not getting along as it was. Just before we found out I was pregnant we were screaming at each other, and I was behaving normally, cursing and throwing things around the kitchen in a fit of rage.

I was trained well in the arts of making life hell for the people around me. I decided after hanging up the phone with him that day that I would leave. Within four hours I was packed, telephone shut off, bank account closed and utilities shut off. They were all in my name and it only took a quick phone call.

I called a cab and had arranged to go to my brother's place and move on from there. I told them about losing my baby and they were sympathetic.

My whole family had phoned to tell me how sorry they were that I lost the baby. I went to work in Tofino, Vancouver Island that spring. Here I was, thirty-one years old, and still rambling around, living out of duffle bags. It was a great adventure. I enjoyed being in Tofino, walking around the Pacific Rim National Park and seeing the beautiful Pacific Ocean and the white sand beaches, untouched.

It was good for me and I was able to make some peace in my life. I had been there six weeks when I finally talked to my mom down in New Mexico. They had just arrived back from a year long move to Nova Scotia and were at my sister's place. My mom was telling me that she could not breath and that no one was doing anything for her.

I told my sister and my dad to help her out, or get her to the hospital, one or the other. The next day my sister phoned to tell me I

needed to fly down there as quickly as possible. My mom had another stroke and was back in the hospital. I took a bus from Tofino to Vancouver, flew to Calgary and then flew to New Mexico the next day.

I was only been there for about an hour, and was holding her hand, when she confessed to me she had been a bad mother. I reassured her that we all loved her very much. Irene came in the room and asked me to go to dinner with her. We left and by the time we came back our mom was in another coma that she would never come back from.

She passed away three days later when the doctors decided to pull the plug on her life support, they phoned to tell us it was done and did not even call us to let us know they were going to do that, but she had no chance of coming out of the coma so it was inevitable, someone had to make the decision to take her off life support and let her go, later that night and I felt a sense of relief wash over me. I loved my mother, but I was glad to finally be free of her reign of terror, control and abuse.

Kathi wanted me to stay down there in Albuquerque with them, but I could not stay there. I had left Albuquerque for good in spirit, mind and body. My home was now in Canada, I explained to her. I had to go back.

I moved back to Calgary and got a job cooking in a pub. The pay was not great and I was very poor. I had nothing in my apartment, but a white plastic outdoor chair, a plant, a sleeping bag and my clothes. That was all I had to my name. I lived in that apartment for an entire year and I spent that year crying, suffering, healing and recovering.

I cried for the loss of my childhood.

I cried for all the abuse I endured and suffered.

I cried for my mom whom I loved and yet hated so much for making me hate myself.

I cried for the loss of my sweetheart, Cecil, whom I loved very much.

I cried for the loss of my baby, my little girl. I named her Rhiannon Dee. I know that she is in heaven waiting for me and I will see her one day soon.

I cried for my brothers whom I loved and were long since dead and gone.

Most of all, I cried for myself.

For the first time ever I realized that the little girl inside of me who my mother tried to kill and succeeded in creating a hell for was angry and upset and screaming to be loved. She was screaming to get out.

The death of my mom had sent my inner self into a rage. A burning, fiery rage built up on the inside of me that I had never experienced before. This feeling of rage had never surfaced before as I had never dealt with my inner child before.

My entire life had been about trying to please my mom, and then trying to not let the abuse I suffered from completely destroy me. I had pushed my inner child into a closet and locked the door, and it was going to be a long

road ahead to heal my inner self, but I knew it would be necessary in order to live a healthy lifestyle.

Surviving, I think?

Chapter 21

“You can always give me a try? If I don’t work out, I can go!?” I pleaded with him hoping desperately to land this job. Jerry took a long drag off of his cigarette, looked at my resume and said to me, “Sure, you can start tomorrow night.” I had a job and I was so relieved.

When I had arrived back in Calgary after my mom’s funeral, I stayed with a friend of my brother and sister-in-law for three weeks. I had been out walking the core of Calgary everyday looking for a job. I was applying for everything I could: cooking, office work, waitress; It did not matter. I just needed a job. I had seen an ad for a cooking position at a local pub and applied. The job was for a night cook--hot food on the line.

I went for a quick interview and they took me on. I had no references in Calgary and only three months reference from working on the train the previous year where I had met Cecil. I found an apartment and moved in

with the help of Alin, who I had been staying with.

It was nearly June and I had been bouncing around since I left Edmonton in February. The apartment I found was downtown, close enough to the restaurant that I could walk to work. It was small, but clean and the price was right. I moved in and Alin let me keep her plastic resin outdoor patio chair.

I set everything up in the livingroom where all the daylight came in because I did not have any lamps or television. I had a radio and my walkman. My music and I had a lot of healing to do so I was not overly concerned with being entertained by nightly television shows or sitcoms anyway.

I was just glad to have a place of my own to settle down in. I was thankful to God for providing for me as I knew it was all his doing. I worked the night shift at the Barley Mill Traditional English Pub. My shifts would start at 4 p.m. and end at midnight.

It was a very busy pub and I had to work hard to keep up with the cooks and the chefs.

I was still a little out of it from grieving the loss of my mom and not sleeping all that well. I would cry all day and then go to work and come home exhausted. I would then sleep for a few hours and it would start all over again, cry all day and go to work, come home exhausted. I felt as though this would never end.

I was sleeping on my floor because I had absolutely no furniture. All I had was a sleeping bag and used all of my clothes underneath it for padding. I would lay there at night and remember all of the bullshit that had transpired before I moved to Canada and the horrible things my mom had done to me over the years.

I could still remember her telling me that her children did not mean anything to her, "We didn't count." Those words repeated in my head as I reflected on the thoughts of my poor brothers who had lived and died in Calgary, the city I was now living in.

I had been in Calgary for my brother, Howard's, funeral in April. It had been cold and snow was still on the ground. I

remember noticing that it was a big city, much bigger than Albuquerque.

I thought about my brother and how he had been cremated. His ashes were left at the funeral home and no one picked them up. The family thought that someone else had picked them up, perhaps my brother, Kevin, but no one actually picked them up and the funeral home just spread them.

I found out that the reason no one picked the ashes up was because they did not want to pay the couple hundred dollars storage fee the funeral home was charging for the delay. I wish I would have know, I would have taken a loan out to get those ashes myself and not just leave them there as if it did not matter. His life had mattered a lot to me regardless of how my mother felt about him.

My sister, Irene, had always said that she disowned our brothers. She would not admit that she had any brothers and, until the day she died from cancer, she never said one kind word about our brothers, or our family for that matter.

I know she loved my sister and I (and possibly even our parents). She had no love in her heart for our brothers that I knew anything about. It was sad. The one brother that remained still living was not close in age with me and had moved out before I was born. I felt very much alone and very much on my own. My healing journey would be a lonely one.

I had started to feel very anxious and angry as the weeks and months rolled on. Something was chewing me up on the inside and it started out like a small scream coming from somewhere way down deep inside some microcosm of a small cell in my body.

It started to get more noticeable and I began to spend large amounts of time thinking about finding a field where I could go and just scream my head off. This would be a scream that would be heard not only around the world, but across the universe and possibly the whole Milky Way Galaxy! It would be deafening!

Bad Dreams, Fading Scars and Pain in my Heart

Chapter 21

“Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!” I yelled as my knee came in contact with the inside of the hot oven door. I struggled, but it did no good. My knees were burning as my mom was pushing my hands onto the oven racks.

“AaaaaYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!!!!!!!” I screamed “LOOK WHAT YOU ARE MAKING ME DO!!!!” she yelled at me. “I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF MY WAY GOD DAMN YOU!!!! YOU ARE DOING THIS TO YOURSELF, YOU STUPID PIECE OF SHIT!!!!” she screamed at me as she stood behind me and was literally shoving me into the oven.

I remember being brought into the living room and beaten, all the while she was cursing me. As I stood there and cried, the palms of my hands burned and my knees were killing me. The burn on my side was

what started the whole ordeal as I had come through the kitchen while my mom was pulling a sheet pan of cookies out of the oven.

It was summer time and I had a halter top on. As I walked by, she turned with the sheet pan and ran into my side with it. Instead of setting the pan down to see if I was okay she became angry and turned vicious, shouting at me and burning me.

“Nooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!” I yelled. I was crying hysterically. Suddenly I woke up and realized it was just another one of my nightmares. I had them regularly and each one seemed worse than the one before.

I got up and went to jump in the shower. Throwing my sleepshirt on the floor I looked into the mirror, looking at the scar from that day in the “house of hell” on Indian School Road.

It had faded some. I had received that lovely memoir from my mom when I was only 11-years old. The scar was nearly 20-years old

now and was fading over time, but it was still quite big and noticeable.

I had often woke myself up crying out while dreaming about my mom's abusive behavior toward me. When Cecil and I moved to Edmonton I woke us both up quite often. I was crying and sobbing uncontrollably as he held me, listened to me and tried to console me.

My mom was right! She had warned me that she would "haunt" me until the day I died and so far she had been accurate. I turned the shower on and pulled the shower curtain back as I looked in the mirror at my back and the damaged blood vessels that left a dark shadow on a protruding lump on the right side of my spine near my neck.

I had hardly no feeling there anymore. The nerves had been damaged from being beaten with the rolling pin and slammed and tossed into walls. Most days I wouldn't even think about the scars and deep tissue damage done those many years before, but after the recent reoccurring dreams of the abuse my mom

inflicted upon me, it left me feeling angry and all the hatred would come rushing back.

I could hear her voice as she verbally abused me. Now she was gone and I had no way to ever reconcile with her. I had no way to ask her to apologize for what she had done to me and to all of us for that matter. I wanted her to tell me she actually did want me, and that I was her special girl and that she did not mean to hurt me. I wanted to hear all of that from her lips, from her mouth, but now all I had were bad dreams, fading scars and a desire to scream my head off.

That first year in Calgary was a long one and I focused on work and trying to stay sane.

Maintaining Some Composure and Laying Down the Law

Chapter 23

I held the phone to my ear, not knowing what to expect. Would he have another girlfriend? After all it had been a full year since we split with absolutely no contact by any means and not a single phone call. Would he want me back?

The thoughts were coming in so fast I could not slow them down, “Hello” Cecil said answering his phone “Hi Cecil” I spoke softly and tried to maintain some composure. “Any ladies in your life?” I asked him jokingly. “No, just you” he said, “I’ve been waiting for you to call.”

The conversation went well and I explained that my mother had passed away the year before and that I was living and working in Calgary. We talked, just like old times and it was so nice to hear his voice.

This man was the love of my life and I hadn't discovered that until the year we were apart. The only "good" thoughts that would enter my mind were thoughts of how much he meant to me and how much I really missed him.

Cecil came down for a three day visit and I was so happy to see him. I had been so isolated that year, other than going to work, I really had made no concrete connections with anyone, only one woman who had befriended me at the restaurant I was cooking at.

Mirelle lived one block from me and, since we both worked the same shift at the restaurant, we started to walk to work together. That year we had developed quite a good relationship. Not too close, but it was nice to have another woman to talk to.

She was a few years older than myself and also happened to be my boss. Her boyfriend doted on her and she was a lot of fun to be around. She had really brightened my world as she had no idea what I went through that year, and the pain that was still very much in

my heart and sometimes almost destroyed me. She brought sunshine into my world and I was so thankful she was there.

Cecil went back to Edmonton and we had mutually agreed that we would consider getting back together. He was concerned that I would “freak out” again and leave him again like I had left him in Edmonton. I was concerned that we would continue our abusive behavior towards each other, so we were both a little anxious about trying again.

Within two weeks Cecil phoned to say that he thought we should try again. He told me if I wanted him back in my life, he would move to Calgary. His work was up north in the “bush” so it did not matter what part of Alberta he lived in because he had to travel to get there either way.

He moved in with me a few weeks later. I was so confused as I waited for him to arrive. All sorts of thoughts flooded my mind. On one hand I loved him so much and needed him in my life, but I did not want to be dependent on him. I felt he had let me down

once before already when he wasn't there when I lost the baby.

I also worried about my own behavior as I was still feeling the same old feelings I had been feeling since I could remember; sadness, darkness, hopelessness, self loathing and worthless. I still felt so much anger in my heart for what my parents had done to me, my brothers and sisters.

I still felt so much rage towards the abuse I suffered at the hands of the very people that were supposed to love me, nurture me, teach me and encourage me, but instead caused me to have hatred in my heart towards what they had done and for life itself.

By the time Cecil showed up I was virtually a mess and almost panicking. The day he arrived I told him that we needed to have a chat. I told him that he was going to have to listen to everything I was going to say and acknowledge that he understood and agree to it.

I then told him that he would have his chance to talk and say his peace and that I would

have to acknowledge that I understood and agree to it also. I wanted us to mutually respect each others feelings and opinions.

He agreed and I started talking; three hours later we finally understood each other. I started out by reminding him about the time I woke up and told him that my mom had abused me and he had held me in his arms as I cried uncontrollably. He said that he remembered.

I told him everything. I told him about all of the fights my parents had, the violence and the dysfunction in our family as I was growing up. I told him about the physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse I was made to suffer. I told him how it made me feel and why it was so important for me that he treat me with respect and dignity and love me as I could take no more abuse.

I told him that I did not want to continue on and perpetuate the abusive cycle my parents put on me, and that if we were going to stay together, we would have to stay for the

simple reason that we wanted to make life better for each other, loved each other and respected each others feelings. We promised that we would not say or do harmful things to each other as I had seen my parents do for all those years.

Then it was Cecil's turn to talk. He explained some of my behaviours that he did not feel comfortable with like my destructive rages I would go on when I was upset. I would throw dishes and break things and verbally abuse him when I was angry and he did not want to endure that again.

He also explained that he knew I did not trust him and that he wished I would learn to try. He told me that he wanted to protect me and be the strong one and I was not letting him do that. I obviously did not have a good example of a father figure growing up. After seeing my father abuse my mom, and not protecting my mom, but battering and verbally abusing her and all of us children. My father also faltered and, instead of being strong, tried to kill himself when my brother Chesley was killed.

I had an issue trusting all men and he said that my inability to trust him was hurting his feelings because he loved me.

We agreed that we would treat each other with respect, love and dignity and that when problems would arise, as they always do, we would talk it out maturely and settle it peacefully. The years ahead would prove to be the very best years I had ever had.

Happy Valentine's Day

Chapter 24

I sat and waited in the car for Cecil to return from his doctor's appointment. Over the last year his legs had started to swell and his health had not been that great. He was 20 years older than I and did not look or act his age.

He was very much a "younger" man in every way possible. He was fun, spontaneous and a "live for the moment" kind of guy who did not let anything get him down. He really knew how to live and chose to live in the moment and not dwell on the past or worry about the future.

But, this doctors appointment had him a little nervous, and me too, as he had been airlifted out of a camp up north a week earlier and flown to a hospital in Peace River, Alberta near the Northwest Territories.

He was then flown to a hospital in Edmonton where he got in an ambulance and was taken to a hospital here in Calgary. They were not sure

what was wrong and had done all kinds of tests, but still had no answers. He was then discharged from the hospital for the weekend.

Valentine's Day was coming up and he had convinced them that he would go right back to the hospital if need be, but that he wanted to be with me on Valentine's Day and not in the hospital.

Cecil walked out of the hospital doors and toward the car. He slowly got in and sat down and looked over at me with tears in his eyes.

He then said softly "I'm dying"....my heart just sunk, my world turned upside down, I could not breath and just sat there looking at him with tears rolling down his face.

I reached out to him and grabbed his hand and told him, "No, honey, you cannot be dying?" "Two years max and then I'll be gone..." he said, his voice shaking slightly. "That's just a great Valentine's present, Cecil!" I said not knowing how to even think about what he had just told me. "Why, honey? What's wrong?" I asked. "Liver disease," he mumbled. We just sat there for a while in silence. Then I started the car after regaining some composure and we drove home.

The next year would be consist of doctors appointments, clinic courses, consultations in Edmonton and a whole new change in our eating habits and social activities. He was not allowed to drink any alcohol, beer or consume any salt. We went to work and completely changed our diet, started cooking from scratch and did not drink a drop of alcohol. Things continued on like this for the first year or so with my focus directly on Cecil and not on myself.

We were determined to not let this beat us..we were determined to keep Cecil alive and he was placed on a liver transplant list. The next year we moved to a small duplex with a yard and trees away far away from the downtown core. It was a nice time for us, even with the stress of the situation. We both agreed that we were going to fight this disease with everything we had, with our minds, our attitudes and our hearts.

A Thing in Motion Stays in Motion

Chapter 25

Cecil was diagnosed terminally ill on Valentine's Day 2001, and it was now three years later. His health had slowly started to deteriorate, and sometimes he looked as though he were 100 years old, but he kept busy and we continued on, going through the motions. He was still on the transplant list to receive a donated liver, but we did not receive a phone call until Dec 23rd, 2003.

The phone rang unexpectedly. It was Cecil's liver transplant clinic calling to tell him that they had a liver that was a match for him. They advised him that he only had 2 minutes to make up his mind as the liver was going to be flown to the recipient within hours. He only had that one chance to make a decision of a lifetime.

Cecil thought about it for a few minutes. I was standing nearby and listening to him intently. He asked them to wait while he discussed it with me. He explained that he did not feel right about it and he wasn't ready. I told him, as I had been

telling him from the very beginning, that it was his body and his decision to make, not mine.

We had already discussed this issue for years now and he knew that I would not be happy if he made a decision based solely on what I wanted and not what he wanted. "No, I'm turning it down," he told the lady on the other end of the phone.

She could not believe it and asked him to repeat what he had just said, and then they hung up. "It's Christmas and I don't want to be in a hospital getting a liver transplant on Christmas Eve when I only have a 50 percent chance of making it through alive," Cecil said.

It was nearly midnight and we sat up and talked about his decision for a while and just decided that there had to be a reason why he did not want to take that opportunity and get the transplant.

He did not feel comfortable about it and could not explain it, but something in his heart was telling him not to do it. I told him I was okay with his decision if he was okay with it.

We spent the next year talking about it off and on. We found out later that the liver had been HIV positive and that the person who received that very liver died shortly after the transplant. Cecil knew there was a reason for not going ahead with that transplant and I told him that he did the right thing by listening to his gut instincts.

That same year I was offered a job as a Sous Chef at a restaurant my friend, Mireille, was working at. She was the Executive Chef and asked me if I would like to be her Sous Chef. I could not turn it down. It was like a dream come true. I had been out of the cooking industry for the last four years and had gone to work for a bank. I had always dreamed of being a Sous Chef, the next rank from Executive or Head Chef, and here was my friend, offering it to me on a silver platter.

Mireille and I had become very close over those years and she now knew about my past and about Cecil's terminal illness. She was really one of the very best friends I had ever had. She was always looking out for me and she seemed to care so much about me and would even talk with me about the abuse I suffered as a child.

We had, at times, become inseparable. I would often work part-time in the restaurant kitchens she was in charge of and we would spend time together outside of work just relaxing and drinking coffee. She was an awesome chef and had even invited me to her home for dinners on a weekly basis. She tried to take away my pain and sadness and, for a little while, she really did.

I went to work full-time as the Sous Chef and, for the first time in my life, really felt good about what I was doing. I had a certain sense of self-worth and confidence had started to develop as I had run the kitchen with a team of cooks for nearly four months during one of the busiest times of the year.

Mireille had fallen at home and hurt herself and was off work on medical leave. She would still come in and do the Executive Chef paperwork and offer me advice, though. I was really starting to feel that things were looking up, even with Cecil's illness, and life was not looking so dark anymore.

Trouble in the Air

Chapter 26

The year went by so fast, I barely had time to turn around. It was only one year later and I was no longer the Sous Chef at the restaurant. My friend, Mireille, and I had a major blow up that ended our friendship and we had promised each other that we would not let the "job" come between us and our friendship, but it was inevitable....and it did.

She said something that hurt me in the kitchen one day that made me so angry I confronted her about it. She had told me that sometimes I was "too much" and I said, "What did I just hear you say?" and she said it again. She told me I was too much to handle, too much upkeep and just too much trouble for her.

I knew what she was saying as she had been telling me that year that I should go get professional help. I took it hard as she had been my friend for the last 12-years. She had always brought up my abuse related issues and asked

me questions about my past. For her to throw it back in my face really broke my heart.

She said she would always be there for me and always love me. Then she turned on me in front of another staff member and it just cut my heart. That year was extremely hard for me. Cecil had moved out. His son from a previous marriage had come to stay with us the year before and he had made life miserable for Cecil and I. He had went to work with me at the restaurant and had made friends with people doing drugs because he had a serious drug problem.

Cecil could not handle the stress of his son's behavior and had started to go downhill health wise, and he felt that he should move out to a semi care seniors building that had a nurse on site. So, Cecil moved out. Cecil's son stole \$2,500 from me, left the country and went back home to England.

I moved back downtown one block from the restaurant, two blocks from where I had lived when I first moved to Calgary.

Three months after Mireille and I had that blow up, I quit. First I told her exactly how I felt, shouting at the top of my lungs so everyone could hear. I told her that she was rude, hurtful and did not care about anyone, but herself.

Her staff did not trust her and thought the same things and I did not mind sticking up for them. I had finally had enough. She was, in a way, very much like my mom, using me and then abusing me. I ended the friendship, cut all ties and walked away from that whole situation with a very wounded heart.

That year was very trying on me. Cecil moved out, I was robbed and I lost my dream job. My best friend and I spent the next three months sitting around trying to maintain my sanity in my apartment. I got a job back with the bank I originally worked at. After only seven months, my boss told me that "I needed to get a backbone" because I would not treat people badly.

She wanted me to tell other financial institutions staff members off and I said no, that I could only treat them with respect and common courtesy and so she insulted me. We had a meeting about

it, documented it and I quit that job, too. I just could not understand why I was having so much trouble in my life.

My heart was so heavy and, as I spent weeks alone in my apartment, I noticed that the same old hurts from so long ago were re-surfacing again. The anger and hatred I had for life was trying to overtake me and I could not find any peace in my heart at all. It was nowhere to be found and I was completely a lost soul.

One Foot in Front of the Other

Chapter 27

Cecil and I remained close even though he moved out. I still needed him in my life and wanted to be with him til the end. We decided that it did not matter if we lived together or not. We loved each other and that's all that mattered.

I found an odd contract job with a job placement company and spent time a lot of alone in my apartment. No friends ever came around to see how I was and I was feeling so down. I was determined to maintain and just made my way through the days and nights struggling alone.

I ended up moving again to an apartment in another building in the complex and lost another job that had just hired me on and then fired me as they felt that I did not "fit in." I was happy they let me go because they were so rude, cursing at work, yelling at me and they did not give me any real training or tell me what they wanted me to do, so I was glad to be out from under that negativity.

I started out the first month or so in my new apartment trying to keep a good attitude, a positive outlook and had the feeling that if I just held on long enough I could do it. I had always been looking back on my life and thinking that if I could survive what I was forced to endure for so many years, and then come this far, I could do it.

So I persevered and kept looking for a job. I sent out nearly fifty resumes and did not receive one phone call. It was looking pretty hopeless and some days and nights I would just sit on the couch with the same old feelings of rejection and self-worthlessness.

My dad and I only spoke on and off a few times a year. I had not seen him for years as he was living in Yuma, Arizona near where my oldest sister and her husband were living. He told me to just keep the faith and to reach out to Jesus and he would help me.

I told him I would, but knowing that I wouldn't. I did not listen to anything my dad would tell me as he was still so rude most of the time. He often told me that my mom was a whore and a slut and was sleeping around and that none of us kids were his.

I confronted him about it over the phone one day and told him that if he ever said another negative word about my mom I would never talk to him again. So, he never did because he knew how serious I was.

I was feeling so down even though I was still putting one foot in front of the other and continuing to do the normal things that needed to be done. I still felt the intense anger and hatred come back to invade my heart and my mind.

Thoughts of the abuse I suffered were an everyday issue for me and I wanted to get out of my own skin. I wanted to leave this earth and move on. I felt that I was still living in hell and that the only relief I would experience would be to end my life.

I had even thought about driving my car over the edge of the Grand Canyon nearly 20 years

before. As usual, I would just continue sitting around in my own pain, in my own dark world while the rest of the world passed me by.

The Redemption

Chapter 28

Sitting on my couch alone in my apartment with no job and a screwdriver in hand. I looked at my arm, then at the screwdriver..anger flowed through my veins, remembering back to when I was a child and in so much pain, both physically and emotionally. My heart could take no more pain. It was saturated and I wanted to show the pain in my heart to the world.

I wanted someone, anyone, to see my pain, my wounded inner child and to know how it felt to wake up everyday to the knowledge of so much suffering. I wanted others to know what it's like to have no peace in their hearts and to really feel my pain. I wanted so badly to self-harm, but I always stopped myself, and this time I wondered why I should...what was the point? No one would care anyways.

I leaned back on the couch, trying to relax, and it became clear to me. Why would I want to injure myself more than I had already been injured?

This would allow my parents to win this fight. I became more angry, but this was a different kind of anger. A different feeling altogether. I thought to myself, "I'm winning this fight, God!! I'm going to win because I'm going to stay ALIVE!" A sense of self-preservation mode kicked in.

I set the screwdriver down on the coffee table and, at the age of 41, I had finally decided that I was going to live and not hurt myself! I was going to fight this fight to the end and win this battle my parents had started the day I was brought into this world. "I WIN!!!"

I became empowered and decided to start telling myself this mantra everyday until it was part of me. "I DO matter...I DO count!!!" I would continue to tell myself this everyday while looking for jobs on the Internet and sending off resumes.

I had been out of work for over two months, all of my savings were gone and it was looking kind of hopeless, but I still had a roof over my head, food in the refrigerator and I had my health and life.

One morning after jumping out of the shower, I was getting ready to go and start the daily routine of sending off more resumes when something amazing happened.

I turned into the hallway by my bedroom and an overwhelming, intense feeling came over me. It was a warm and comfortable feeling. I looked up and almost fell down as I knew who was before me. The Lord Jesus Christ was standing there in my apartment with His hands and arms reaching out to me, "Pass up all of your burdens, that is what I am here for," The Lord said. I thought..."This is too good to be true!?" but I went with it and I passed up all of my burdens to Him and then I knew what had happened. I had been saved, redeemed, no more to suffer the horrible feelings in my heart.

I danced around the apartment celebrating my redemption. I did not know what to do with myself. I sat down on the couch and the tears came, and the tears would not stop. I cried and cried for two weeks, watched Christian programming and decided I needed a Bible. I went and purchased one, brought it home and began to read...and I read and read and all the while I cried.

I could feel the Holy Spirit comforting me and surrounding me. I felt a love that I had never experienced before and I asked God to help me cleanse my heart from all the anger and the hatred that had been stored up for so long. I asked God to fill my heart with love, mercy, compassion, goodness, kindness, light and truth. I could feel a complete transformation come over me as the weeks rolled by. All the hatred, anger and rage was being pushed out of my heart and in it's place was a new found feeling of compassion and love, just pouring into my heart.

I could now see my inner child as God saw me. I reached out to myself and began to learn to love myself and to feel good about myself. A smile engulfed my face and has been there ever since that day, May 22, 2007. Three weeks later I got a contract job near the apartment and started working full-time. I enjoyed the new job immensely and my co-workers.

In my spare time I spent every waking hour studying the Bible. I took my Bible everywhere. I read it on the bus, in the cab, at Cecil's place, at work on lunch breaks, coffee breaks, my sister's apartment, it went everywhere with me as I was going to keep God's Word first place in my life.

Later that fall my sister, Irene, and her husband came for a visit. She had been sick and in the hospital for surgery, but would not say what was wrong. They stayed two days and were gone, but it was good to see her as I had not seen her since 1998. She was almost sixty-years old at this time and was not in good health. Christmas of 2007 she passed away from cancer.

My sister, Kathi, and I went down to see her before she passed away and we got to spend one precious evening with her before she went on to be with the Lord. I was sad, but I had God's promise and knew that she was with our Father in Heaven.

The following year I felt compelled by the Lord to get involved in child and human rights as I had seen a program on TV that left me crying, sobbing and walking around my apartment in circles mad and angry. A hidden camera had caught on video a woman in Afghanistan who had been bashed in the face with a gun butt by her husband. She was on the ground begging for help, but there would be no help for her. She would receive no pain medication, no doctors and no comfort.

I thought to myself, "Why am I not saying something? Why am I just sitting here on the couch and not getting involved?" This question would haunt me for the next few weeks as I sought the Lord's direction and finally decided to get involved. I decided to try to make a difference--one person at a time..

I began volunteering for a few advocacy organizations in Canada and the U.S. These organizations worked to improve the conditions for women and children in Afghanistan and this made me realize that I should get involved locally and with our own children. I decided to take some courses at a college here in Calgary and began the next journey of my life.

As I began learning in my college courses, it became clear to me that what I wanted to do was help to end child abuse. I decided that if I could help one person it would be worth it and started to write my own child abuse advocacy blog. I had never thought about making my story public before, but after realizing that "silence" was the main problem, I decided to raise my voice, tell my story and break the silence.

I hope to be able to continue promoting awareness for the rest of my life...to help stop child abuse, to help stop all human rights abuses, and to help a survivor of child abuse realize that they are not alone, that they do matter, they do count and that they, too, can have "a change of heart."

Peace my brothers and sisters.

About the Author

My sweet husband Cecil went to heaven on August 4th, 2018. It has been a time of hardship and grief, but I have peace in my heart because Cecil is no longer suffering and languishing in pain. He is free and so am I. I continue to author several blogs, speak publically about child abuse and child abuse prevention, produce and host online internet broadcasts and work alongside child abuse prevention organizations and advocates to help by being just one more person demanding change.

A Note from the Author:

The contents of this story are in no way a complete history as I am merely presenting facts that represent the clear meaning and motivation for writing this story.

It is my most sincere intention to not play the accuser. My aim in telling my story is not one of revenge. It is not due to a compelling sense of duty. It is merely to present my story to readers who may have experienced abuse of any kind in their lifetime and might be comforted to know that there is hope, life is worth living, and that through it all, we can all contribute and help to prevent child abuse and human rights abuses, working toward a peaceful end to a violent beginning.

All proceeds from my books go to Not For Profits that work to stop and prevent child abuse.

To schedule Laurie Ann Smith to attend your program or event please contact her at:

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